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ABSTRACT

A study documenting and describing dialogue journal writing in a group of nine tenth graders in an Australian secondary school English class is reported. The overall purpose was to understand the nature of dialogue journal writing and to assess its value as a suitable mode of encouraging writing among secondary students. Specific aspects of dialogue journal writing assessed include quantity, the nature and number of topics written about, the degree to which students elaborate in the journal writing, the quality and nature of the elaboration, and student attitudes toward writing in general and to dialogue journal writing overall. The study was conducted over a one-month period, with 15 entries for each student as the data base. Attitude surveys were administered at the beginning and end of this period, and a journal self-evaluation form was provided after the month's end. The report reviews the relevant literature, details the study, and discusses the results in each area of inquiry. No significant change was found in the course of the study in any of the areas addressed, despite a slight shift toward discussion of more personal topics. However, a potential supportive and developmental role and a possible bridge between process- and product-oriented writing instruction strategies are suggested. Other classroom implications for both teacher and student are examined. Appended materials include a bibliography, the attitude and evaluation forms used, sample entries, a topic chart, and a coding sheet. (MSE)

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DIALOGUE JOURNAL WRITING IN THE SECONDARY SCHOOL

by

EVELYN TUREWICZ

Submitted in fulfilment of the Independent Study requirements for the Diploma in Reading/Language, Riverina College of Advanced Education.

November, 1983

Supervisor: Dr. Fred Gollasch

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This study is greatly indebted to the pioneering work in this field by Jana Staton with Roger Shuy and Joy Kreeft.

Sincere thanks are due to the nine students who participated and made this Study possible.

My deepest thanks go to my husband who guided me through the Computer Wasteland so that I could produce this document using a word processor.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This major essay is a descriptive account of an Action Research Project on the use of dialogue journals in a Victorian Secondary School with nine students from a Grade 10 English class. A dialogue journal is "the use of a journal for the purpose of carrying out a written conversation between two persons".(Staton,1982,p.4)

This study documents and describes the dialogue journal writing of nine secondary students. It examines both the quality and quantity of their writing as well as their attitude to writing in general and to dialogue journal writing.

In this Chapter, the problem under investigation will be outlined, the aims and focus of the study will be defined, the setting and details of the study will be given and a rationale for the entire project will be given.

Problem Under Investigation

> It appears that as people grow older and move into higher levels of schooling, writing is used more and more frequently as a testing medium and in the process, fear and distrust of writing begin to build up.
>
> (Judy,1981,p.14)

A recurring educational problem over the last decade and a half has been with the ability of secondary students to write English prose. Concern has been expressed over the quality and quantity of prose written, as well as the teaching methodology employed. Research conducted so far has revealed a distressing dilemma: despite the increasing emphasis on writing in the secondary curriculum, very little continuous writing is actually produced. A recent Canadian study revealed that "the overall amount of writing ranges from a low of about one page per month of a full school year, to a high of about one page per week". (In "Interchange", 1981-82,p.69)

Not only is the actual writing time minimal, but also the nature of what little writing is produced, is highly suspect. A National Study of Writing in American Secondary Schools conducted in 1979 reported that few writing activities involved writing of any great length for a sustained duration. (Applebee,1980) Mechanical writing tasks were favoured as against expressive writing, while "personal uses of writing were not used at all". (Applebee,1981,p.80)

There are very little grounds for suspecting that the Australian situation is any different. A small-scale Tasmanian study of secondary writing conducted in 1975 showed that students wrote amounts of less than two pages per day in Grade 7, to less than three pages per day in Grade 10. (Annells,1978,p.48) A later Queensland study of six children from Grades 9 and 11, showed that "on average they wrote about half a page of continuous writing per day." (Carr,1977) What is particularly disturbing is that almost all of the writing was transactional with "little evidence to suggest that children were being encouraged to write their way to understanding". (Carr,1978,p.48) Instead, a high percentage of writing in secondary schools is informational, written with a view to the teacher as examiner.

This stands in direct contrast to the needs of Secondary students who are in their adolescent years and subsequently are undergoing profound physical and mental changes. It is a time when "identity has to be searched for and understood when found". (Hemming, 1980,p.8) Students in secondary schools become more interested in themselves and their outside, private activities. These students could use writing to explore these developments, yet the constraints placed upon writing in the secondary school, particularly in the Senior school with the pressure of the Higher School Certificate (HSC) and its external, essay-based examinations, provide litle opportunities for such exploration and clarification. What is needed is a mode of writing which provides scope for individual growth and development, yet at the same time expands both the quality and quantity of students' writing, providing more opportunities for continuous writing of an expressive nature. One could hypothesize that if such a form of writing were found, students would write substantially more and their writing would be of a more expressive nature than occurs at present, as the above-mentioned studies indicate.

Aim of Study

> If we are interested in its true complexity and mystery and want to get our students actively involved in writing as a process inseparable from their own growing and becoming -then the journal must be there at the heart of our writing classroom.
>
> (Nelson,1982,p.15)

This study seeks to document and describe a particular form of journal writing, called dialogue journal writing, from a group of nine Grade 10 students in the same English class. The overall purpose of the study is to try to understand the nature of dialogue journal writing and to assess the value of dialogue journal writing as a suitable mode of writing for secondary students. It will try to examine to what extent dialogue journals can be "at the heart of our writing classroom".

This study draws to a large extent on the pioneering work done in this field by an American study: "Analysis of Dialogue Journal Writing as a Communicative Event" by Jana Staton with Roger Shuy and Joy Kreeft (1982). It is in some ways a parallel investigation, but on a much smaller scale and in an Australian context. It differs from the Staton study in that the student sample is much smaller -nine instead of twenty-six students from Grade 10, not Grade 6. The range and types of areas investigated are also much fewer than in the more comprehensive Staton study.

Focus of Study

The focus of the study will be students' dialogue journal writing itself. The study will explore particular features of dialogue journal writing in an attempt to understand the nature of dialogue journal writing. The study analyses the quantity of student writing, the nature and number of topics students write about, the degree to which students elaborate in their dialogue journal writing, as well as the quality and nature of their elaboration. Finally, the study examines student attitudes to writing generally and their attitude to their dialogue journal writing overall.

Specific questions covered by the study are:

1. Do students write more as the number of entries increase?
2. What kinds of topics do students write about and do their topics change overthe duration of the study?
3. How much do students elaborate in their writing and do they elaborate more over the duration of the study?
4. What are the students' attitudes to writing as well as to their dialogue journal writing and do their attitudes to writing change over the duration of the study?

Rationale

There are many changes occurring within society generally and within schools which act as a microcosm of that society, which educators must address. These changes range from new, Governmental, educational policies, to new methodologies and shifts of emphasis within subject areas. It seems that increasingly in the future, the only constant factor is going to be change. As Barry Jones noted:

> Throughout the 1970's, the technological advanced world underwent a post-industrial revolution which will change society in the 1980's more rapidly than any decade since the 1780's when the Industrial Revolution began.
>
> (Jones,1982,Preface)

Because these changes will affect the young people in our schools, a reassessment of the role of education in the new technological society has begun. A recent Victorian Education Department Study in Curriculum and Transition observed: "The question of what schools should do to prepare young people for adult life is and should be at the forefront of educational debate." (Kemmis, Cole, Sugget,1983,p.1) As there is no guarantee that more schooling will secure school leavers with jobs, "many young people have begun to question the usefulness of their school experiences in equipping them to lead meaningful, fulfilled lives in a complex society." (Kemmis, Cole, Sugget, 1983,p1) In response to this situation, the Victorian Education Department has evolved new educational policies, outlined in five Ministerial Papers, and instituted a major Departmental restructuring.

The Director-General of Education, Dr Norman Curry, outlined the main trust of these new policies which:

> should take account of their (students') particular needs and capabilities. It must be an education which challenges each child to the fullest, an education which provides experiences of success for children so that their attitude towards education is a positive one.
>
> (Shallard,1983,p.11)

The emphasis in education, then, should be on meeting the needs of the indivudual student. Barry Jones also suggests that "our primary emphasis in education ought still to be on the general, rather than the specific and vocational". (Jones,1982,p.168) Consequently, for education in the future to be relevant, it must reflect the needs of the students and not be skills-oriented.

Not surprisingly, this overall mood of change has filtered down into subject areas where significant changes are occurring. Traditional approaches are being challenged. In English teaching, recent research into writing led by Donald Graves, has led to a revolution in the way teachers approach the teaching of writing. The emphasis is less on the written product and more on the process of writing itself. The focus has moved from topic-centred, writing-for-teacher-as-examiner, to self-generated topics and writing-for-self. However, these changes are more widespread in the primary schools in Victoria and have not yet reached the majority of secondary English teachers. Despite this, many who are aware, are wondering how to make their particular writing programmes more meaningful and relevant to their students, especially as, in the light of the primary experience, increasing numbers of up-coming secondary students will have encountered what primary teachers now term, "The Graves Method" of writing.

Coupled with this, are the needs of the secondary students themselves who, as adolescents, need more avenues to explore the many changes they are undergoing and which may not be met by traditional English courses that focus on formal development of essay skills in examination contexts. Unfortunately, given the reality that Senior students must sit external examinations in their final year at secondary school, these skills cannot be entirely ignored. By the same token, they should not dominate entire Senior school writing programmes. Many secondary teachers are looking for an approach to writing which allows them to combine the two -expressive, process-oriented writing and formal essay writing in examination contexts.

This study examines a mode of writing which may be more relevant because it is not tied to the acquisition of skills and which acknowledges the needs and capabilities of individuals, yet at the same time, offers them the opportunity to write expressively in a natural, conversational situation. In dialogue journals, the teacher is not examiner, but co-writer who offers a supportive framework for the student's own writing. This study then, investigates a mode of writing which acknowleges the existence of students' private worlds and attempts to form a bridge between them and what the school has to offer. As there has been little research into writing in the secondary school, this study contributes to the general field of writing research and poses directions for further studies in this field.

Finally, because this study draws on an American study, it contributes to that study by providing an Australian context. Because this study uses many research methods pioneered by the American study, it validates and extends the earlier research methods, particularly the discourse analysis methods which evolved perspectives for understanding and analysing the interactive, continuous nature of dialogue journal writing and were used again in this study.

Setting

Experimental Situation

This study was conducted in a secondary school with journal entries being made by the students over the school day, sometimes during class, sometimes at lunchtimes or during free periods, depending on what the student preferred or time permitted. Students were not given a "block" of time in which to write. Journal entries were expected to be made every day and return entries were written into them by the researcher that night. Journals were always returned to the student the following morning. The return dialogue was written by the researcher who has also their class teacher for English.

Environmental Sample

The sample was drawn from a Victorian Government, secondary school with a total school population of over five hundred students. Nine students, five boys and four girls aged between 16 and 15 were drawn from a Grade 10 mixed-abilities English class. All these students had been taught by the researcher in previous years. The nine students were selected to represent different ability groups, so three came from the below-average ability group, three from the average group and three from the above-average ability group. The ability level was determined solely on the basis of each students' academic results for that subject. The students were largely from an Anglo-Saxon backgound, were native English speakers and came from middle-class backgrounds and can be considered to be socially and economically well-adjusted.

Details of Study

The study was conducted over a one-month period and the data base for analysis was fifteen entries from each student. Students and parents were informed of the study to be carried out and their consent gained. Surveys into student attitudes to writing were given out before the study. Students were then given an exercise book which became their dialogue journal. Into this book they were asked to write an entry every day, no maximum length was given but a minimum threshold of one paragraph was expected. They were told to take the time they needed to write in the journals from wherever they could: during English periods, other classes, free periods, while waiting for the teacher to come to class or lunchtime. Students were not given topics to write on. They were simply told to write about anything that interested them. They were encouraged to write freely, without censorship or inhibition and were told that what they wrote would be strictly confidential.

At the end of the day, the Journals were collected by the teacher and that night a personal reply was written by the researcher to each students' journal entry. No evaluation or correction was made. The following morning the journals were given out agin and the process was repeated. At the end of the four-week study, a second attitude survey was given out, as well as journal self-evaluation form for each student to complete. The journals were then analysed as mentioned previously.

Conclusion

There are many changes occurring within society and consequently within education which demand new responses by teachers in their subject areas. In the area of writing, secondary English teachers need to respond to these changes, catering for the particular needs of secondary adolescents and at the same time considering the effect the new "process" approach to the teaching of writing will have on them, their teaching and their students. Secondary English teachers have the responsibility of relating the new approaches to writing now being used in the primary school, to the skills-oriented, essay-based writing demanded by the final examinations their students must face in their Senior secondary years.

In the light of the above, there is a definite need for research into writing in the secondary school. This study contributes to this need by examining a new writing activity - dialogue journals - and by examining its relevance to the secondary situation. As dialogue journal writing is a new writing mode which has not yet been put into a theoretical context, the following Chapter provides a context for the study by giving the background body of literature relevant to it. The third Chapter details the method of the study and is followed by a Chapter discussing the results. The Conclusion evaluates dialogue journals and relates them to the writing in the secondary situation and to the needs of secondary students in our current society.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In order to place this study into a proper context, the relevant theoretical literature is reviewed. The following chapter presents information on:

Journal Writing
Theories of Writing
Theories of Learning
Theories of Language Learning
Adolescents and Secondary Education
Conclusion

The above broad areas are further divided into sub-sections where necessary. Each section in this chapter gives a critical review of previous studies and relates the information presented to the subject of this Independent Study: dialogue journals.

JOURNAL WRITING

Journal writing is an established mode of writing which has a long and colourful history. Journals, diaries and daybooks are all very similar and fulfil the same function. The Oxford dictionary definition of a journal as a "daily record of events" gives us a clear indication of how they are to be used -journals are to be written in every day and contain the author's experiences, thoughts and feelings, usually intended for his/her private reading.

Recent Developments

Since the late 1960's journals in various forms have been advocated by writing specialists. In his book, "Writing Without Teachers", Elbow suggests that students serious about improving their writing should keep a "freewriting diary" for "just ten minutes a day. Not a complete acccunt of your day".(1973,p.9) He instructs students to write without stopping and without censorship as this will" make writing less blocked because words will come out more easily".(p6)

Many school textbooks advocate the keeping of a journal. Says one Year 10 English resource book: "Not only will you have a valuable record of your own reflections, your writing skills will also improve." (Allen, Chessell,1982,p.15) Educational journals abound with individual successes teachers have had in using journals in their English writing programmes in both primary and secondary schools. It is in their practical application to the classroom context that variations in journal writing occur as each teacher implements journals in his/her own fashion, so that each interaction of journals and class becomes a unique event.

Variations occur in the way they are presented -as an entire programme on their own or as a pre-writing aid to more formal writing. The manner in which students are asked to write in them also varies. Some teachers insist that students write in absolute silence for ten minutes every day during the lesson. (Cutter, 1980, p.40) Others allow students to write when they choose or have free time during the day so that the normal teaching programme is not interrupted.(Butler, 1981) Some stipulate a minimum number of lines or pages to be written, others do not. According to the nature of the educational system within which they are operating, journals are graded by some, not by others. All teachers read over student's work, though they respect an individual's right to privacy if requested. Some teachers provide topics to guide student's writing should motivation be lacking; others allow them free rein. The writers featured in many educational journals are quick to extoll the virtues of journals in the classroom. As one author wrote: "I have found the journal to be a very useful tool in the teaching of English." (Payne, 1977, p.306)

Principles Underlying Journal Writing

While the practical implementation of journals in the English classroom leads to many variations, there are some basic principles underlying journals and their use in the English programme common to all approaches. In the first instance, journal entries are reflective statements of an ongoing and personal nature. One author has noted in a small study that: "The largest category of response in the area of the content of the journals was overwhelmingly the expression of feeling". (Butler, 1981)

Another basic principle concerns writing. Few teachers would deny that "writing is a complex skill that requires practice for improvement" (Hull, 1981,p.135). The journal, because it is a daily record, provides plenty of opportunities for writing practice, especially in the continuous, expressive mode so often neglected by present school writing programmes. (See Chapter 1)

It is believed that journal writing promotes fluency as the student rarely has an audience in mind, supposedly writing for him/her self. This eliminates the "premature editing" Elbow talks of where a person "interposes a massive and complicated series of editing between the time words start to be born into consciousness and when they finally come off the end of a pencil onto the page", (Elbow, 1973, p.5) because of a fear of making "mistakes" or of scoring a lower grade. The concern with journal writers is with what they write, not how they write. Perhaps this accounts for the beneficial effect researchers have noted which journals have on students' writing in both improving the quality and quantity of writing produced. At the end of one English programme where journals were used, a researcher reflected on the question, "Is it working?": "Growth is not spectacular, but there is improvement in every child's writing since September...There is not so much reluctance to write." (Cutter, 1980, p.48).

A fourth feature underlying journals is that they allow students to clarify their own thoughts and to shape their own experiences. This occurs because: "Writing is a valuable means of self-discovery" (Fadiman,Howard, 1979). Journal writing allows the writer to "record, recall, reflect and to get in touch with himelf in a very positive way." (Allen,Chessell,1982,p.12) This opportunity for self-expression also provides a "release valve" or "a means of unwinding and relaxing". (Butler, 1981) Journals can help students to understand the value of rehearsing as they "learn the value of the journal as a first draft towards a written product". (Butler, 1981) They can be a natural lead-in to more formal compositions as students discover they have something to say.

Journal writing helps students develop or regain an enjoyment in writing. This is often one of the initial reasons teachers turn to using them in their classrooms. Many teachers who have attempted to use them by setting aside a regular time for writing in them, find that students want more time to write than originally set aside. One researcher who attempted a student evaluation of his journal writing programme found students made many statements "expressing the pleasure and enjoyment that they received from the writing experience." (Butler,1981)Following from the above, teachers who have used the journals have consequently also increased their enjoyment in reading the writing produced by their students and this has led, in general, to higher understanding of their students. One author concluded:

> Despite the obvious advantage to students that regular journal keeping has been, I confess, that the greatest benefit is mine. Each notebook in that stack of Monday journals offers something that I can share in. By the end of the year, I feel I have made more than a hundred friends because of the thoughts we have revealed to each other through journal keeping.
>
> (Alejandro, 1981,p.49)

Criticism of Journals in Classrooms

Not all comments about journal writing are positive. There has been some heavy criticism made as well. One writer has condemned the underlying principles outlined above as "unproven assumptions" (Hollowell, 1982, p.14). He says that students become overfluent and too personal in their writing at the expense of good writing. As he says: "Journals also promote sloppiness, repetition of errors and endless writing in one mode for one audience". He sees them as "a perfect symptom of the self-centred age we live in". The worry critics have, is that allowing students to write uncensored will lead to glorification of "garbage" as students do not need to edit their work and the personal nature of journal writing does not allow for "larger organization of thoughts in a coherent pattern". (Hollowell, 1982,p.16) Another writing specialist, Irmsher, noted another concern that critics feel:

> The popularity of the journal somewhat defeats its purpose as a record of the individual's intellectual and emotional responses to ideas and experiences. If students become facile at writing journal entries, filling up pages the day before journals are due because they have to turn something in, then the journal becomes a sham.
>
> Irmsher,1979,p.87)

A Resolution

Certainly it is often the case that educators overdo a good thing and no-one would want students to "crank out the 200 words they need for this week's journal". (Hollowell, 1982,p.16) No educational activity has inbuilt protection against abuse by the user. What the critics must recognize, however, is that no proponent of their use envisages the use of journals as a total approach to teaching writing. They are merely part of the process of learning and enjoying writing. Many of the problems the critics outline can be eliminated by making journal writing optional so that those who keep one, do so willingly. Similarly, Irmsher notes that the time span for journal use in the English programme should be brief: "Journals should be abandoned after three or four weeks unless a student wants to continue voluntarily. This suggestionn is based on the assumption that several weeks is adequate to demonstrate the value of the journal".(Irmsher, 1979, p.88) The criticism that the journal orocess is self-centred is well answered by Nelson who recalls the psychologist, Ira Progoff, an exponent of the journal process who noted that:

> In the journal we each go down into the weil of our personal experience -but when we have gone deeply enough we come to the underground stream of our common humanity. That is, we go beyond ego concern to a fuller understanding of ourselves and each other.
>
> (Nelson, 1982,p17)

Dialogue Journals

One latest form of journal writing, however, is radically different from any previous attempts at journal writing. Most journals are written with no particular audience in mind and are intensely private records of emotions, thoughts, experiences. A dialogue journal involves a second person who reads what the first writes and responds back in writing and so the process is repeated. The major difference between dialogue journals and other journal writing is that there is interaction or communication. In other words: "It is writing about experiences in a shared context" (Staton, 1982,p.17).

Simply stated, a dialogue journal is: "a continuous written conversation between two people about whatever topics they are interested in, with both having an equal turn and the right to bring up new topics" (Staton, 1982). The self-selection of topics make dialogue journals very different to the assigned topics the majority of students in English classes face. The frequency of writing, format of journal and even participants are variables. The choice of topics is shared "as in any mutual conversation" (Staton, 1982, p.4), and would similarly cover a wide range of topics.

Dialogue journals are significantly different from traditional modes of writing in that the latter are monologues and are less like conventional language systems students are familiar with. The functional nature of the communication between the two participants allows for a wider range of language functions such as complaints, questions, promises, challenges, directives, negative and positive feelings (Staton, 1982, p5). In doing so, they "draw on the student's already acquired native competence in using the conversational style of oral language, audience feedback and physical and social contexts to communicate effectively." (Staton, 1982, p.17) This form of writing has enormous diversity because "unlike much student written composition, dialogue journal writing does not have a single focused objective against which all student's writing can be measured." (Staton, 1982, p.63).

In The Classroom

The journals are a communication between the teacher and the student. During the day when the student has something to say, s/he writes it down in the journal (or a specific time can be set aside). Journals are then collected by the teacher at the end of the day, read through at night by the teacher who responds to each student's writing by writing back a communication. The next day the journal is returned. In this way, the teacher is an active, full participant whose role is not to evaluate or criticize a student's writing, but it is one of an "interested participant" (Staton, 1982, p6). In writing a response to the student, the teacher's writing acts as a model by which the student can determine correct syntax, punctuation and spelling. In this way the teacher is "teaching" by implicit means. It is important to note that dialogue journals are not a "method" for teaching formal writing skills, but are "simply a way for student and teacher to communicate effectively" (Staton, 1982, p.6).

Purpose of Dialogue Journals

Three purposes can be distinguished:

1. They "develop mutuality" (Staton, 1982, p23), between teacher and student and help in establishing and maintaining trust, respect and co-operation with others.
2. They are a major avenue for self-expression and allow for honest expression of opinions and for the upholding of them for their own worth.
3. They provide essential "feedback" needed for the growth of a student's identity, social consciousness and as a testing ground for their own opinions.

Because these are developed in the context of reading and writing an unstated objective becomes clear. They are: "A natural, logical way to help increase student competency in reading and writing and to foster the use of writing as a means to communication important personal ideas and information".(Michael,1982, p.12)

History of Dialogue Journals

The term "Dialogue Journal" was coined by Jana Staton in an American study entitled: "Analysis of Dialogue Journal Writing As A Communicative Event" (1982,p.14). The study sought to: "Document and describe the communicative event of dialogue journal wiritng as a developmental stage in the acquisition of writing as it occurs in a Grade 6 classroom between 26 students and their teacher". (Mrs R.) (Staton,1982,p.10) Mrs R. has been engaging in dialogues with her classes over the last seventeen years and she began them initially: "as a means of helping students remember what they had learned every day". (Staton,1982,p.25) She became involved and began writing back and "soon a dialogue began...the dialogue journals have developed from this beginning into a fully fledged channel of communication." The dialogue journals are an integral part of Mrs R.'s classroom.

There is, however, another important role for the teacher -that of a counsellor who can assist students to develop effective communication skills. Mrs. R. had training in Reality Therapy (directed by Dr.William Glaser) and in Teacher Effectiveness Training (developed by Dr. Thomas Gordon). As a result, the value system by which the teacher guides her own writing is one of "sincerity and openness of expression, interactivess or responsive engagement in the dialogues and willingness to bring up problems for mutual discussion" (Staton, 1982, p.27). Problems students raise in their journals are not solved, but what is more important is that students are learning to talk about their problems with another person.

Having presented the background on journal writing, their use in schools and given a brief outline of dialogue journals -what they are, how they function in the classroom and how they came into existence- the focus of this literature review now turns to an analysis of writing and how dialogue journals relate to the process of writing.

WRITING

Writing is an important component of the Secondary English Curriculum, where the task of the English teacher is: "To help children to extend their competence in using language" ("Teaching Secondary English", 1981, p.1.). Writing is considered a form of language expression which is "central not only to education, but to all life" and which "contributes broadly to the learning process".(Judy,1981,p.12). Consequently the development of writing skills has a central place in the Secondary English Programme.

As the literature on writing is abundant, the following review is divided into sections which look at:

1. The traditional model of writing and the implications for writing instruction.
2. An emerging model of writing and the implications for writing instruction.
3. The effect of attitude on writing.
4. Dialogue journals and the writing process.

1. The Traditional Model of Writing: Writing as a Product

This has been characterised as a two-step transaction which views writing as a process of concluding meaning and ideas. In the first stage, the writer clarifies his/her meaning, forms a clear plan of what s/he is going to say. In the second stage, the writer carries out his/her plan and fleshes out those bare sketches into a finished product. This model of writing has its roots in nineteenth century notions of rhetoric which saw language as a "mirror" of thought or the clothing, "in which one dressed ideas" (Donovan,McClelland, 1980,p37). Errors in language were a result of errors in thought and were meant to be corrected.

Under this model, writing instruction has largely been prescriptive with the teacher as the authority on all correct forms. The emphasis is on mastering conventional grammatical forms which are graded in a hierarchy of increasing difficulty. Correctness, planning and following the rules are cornerstones. Four modes of writing are practiced in essay form: exposition, narration, argumentation and narration. The teacher's role is one of providing topics for students and then marking them. The traditional approach can be supplemented with discussion/reading as a stimulus to students writing, or with providing prose models for students to emulate. These prose models may be of "great" literature which demonstrate good English. Under these conditions the two-step model is modified into a three-step one with reading as the first stage.

The traditional model of writing can be criticized for focusing entirely on "how students should write, rather than how they do" (Britton,1975,p4). It looks purely at the end-product, the finished piece of writing and does not take into account the process of writing. Because of the emphasis on correctness, students tend to view writing as a process of transcription, rather than of composition. Another severe limitation is that the audience for the writing is nearly always the teacher-as-examiner. This can lead to stilted, correct prose which meets all conventions, but where the writing is but a display of knowledge. Research evidence has shown emphasis on the correct form does not necessarily lead to change on the part of the writer and in fact, may produce the reverse situation where the actual writing standard deteriorates. The use of famous writers as models for students to emulate can backfire and intimidate students instead, by making them feel inferior and awkward about their own writing capabilities.

2. An Emerging Model of Writing: Writing as a Process

It is true to say that "at no time in the history of education have more people been interested in the teaching of writing".(Judy,1981,p.1.) In the 1960's debate centred on the content of writing courses; in the 1970's, the argument became one of debate over form versus process, into which came a "back to basics" crisis. Psycholinguistic and cognitive theories of development have been increasingly applied to writing to uncover new insights into that complicated and unique human process we call writing. One author looks forward to the 1980's as a decade where: "Practice and theory are much closer together".(Moss, 1981,p.4)

Researchers into this area were prompted by the question, "What is the process of writing?". Research has ranged from controlled laboratory experiments to observational, naturalistic studies. Investigation into the writing process is continuing and it is important to note that extant research "has not produced a fixed or rigid model of the composing process". (Judy,1981,p.16) In many primary schools today, it is vogue to talk about the "Graves method" of teaching writing which stems from the studies made by Donald Graves, however, he would hotly deny that such a method exists. What is being forgotten is that the writing process varies from writer to writer and that everyone has their own individual process. Any model of writing must recognize "the idiosyncratic nature of the writing process" (Judy,1981,p17).

Yet certain generalizations can be made about the emerging new model of writing. Three major phases can be identified:

1. Rehearsing: Describes the activities which preceede a completed task. May involve discussion, note-taking, research, writing itself.
2. Drafting: Act of composing. The word drafting is used instead of writing because "it implies the tentative nature of our written experiments in meaning.
3. Revising: Reviewing, editing,

receiving criticism, further writing.
(Murray in Donovan, McClelland,1980,
p.4.)

These phases are not distinct and they blend and overlapp constantly as they interact with each other and the text evolves. Murray identified four primary forces which interact: collecting, connecting, writing and reading.(Donovan, McCLelland, 1980,p7). Under this model, writing is not seen as imitation of a better writer or as the mastering of correct conventions, but as a process of letting students "discover how writing finds its own meaning". (Donovan, McClelland,1980,p.20). This model does not see writing as a question of putting prior thoughts onto paper, but rather allows for a working out of thoughts on paper during the process of writing. In this way, a writer can end up with a finished piece completely different to what s/he started out with. Central to this model, then, is the belief that the skills or techniques of writing are best achieved through writing and that is achieved by involvement of the learner in purposeful and relevant activity.

What then are the implications for teaching of this emerging model of writing? The best way to learn to write is by writing. Time spent on learning conventions or planning may be wasted since during the process of writing a student may write about something completely different. Under the emerging model of writing, the teacher acts as facilitator whose task: "is to create an environment in which students can engage their minds and pencils in the writing process".(Judy,1981,p19) The teacher must look "not at what students need to know but what they need to experience" (Murray in Donovan, McClelland,1980,p13). Students must be given plenty of opportunities to write, to revise and making a mess should be allowed. To write well, students need to write about what is important to them, so they must be free to choose their own topics or at least have assignments which are authentic. In this way: "when children control the writing and write about what they know about, their writing is their own and they are driven to make it good".(Gollash,Kamler,Kilarr,1981).

If students solve their own writing problems, the role of teacher as evaluator or as examiner, is discarded for a new one providing "in-process evaluation"(Judy,1981,p22). Assistance is given to the student as they write, not afterwards when it is too late, using individual "conferences" or group conferences which are simply "The experience of sharing writing"(Murray in Donovan, McClelland,1980,p15). In short, the teacher of writing using the process model needs a special kind of courage. The teacher must refrain from being prescriptive, authoritarian and corrective and allow students to discover meaning for themselves using their own subjects, forms and language instead.

3. The Effect of Attitude on Writing

The influence of attitudes on human behaviour cannot be underestimated. How can one define attitude? Attitude can be defined as: "An internal state that influences (moderates) the choices of personal action made by one individual" (Gagne,1965,p44). These internal states have intellectual and emotional aspects and are acquired throughout life from experiences the individual has at home, at school, in the community. They may result from a single incident, from the individual's experiences of success and pleasure or by imitation of other people's behaviour.

Teachers have long recognized the importance of student attitudes to learning and many studies have focused on increasing student motivation and therefore, their attitude to a subject or a specific learning task. These focus on relating "specific teacher behaviours" to "explicit student behaviours" with the aim of increasing student learning potential.(Klausmeier,1961,p191)

In Chapter I it was established that writing time in Secondary schools is minimal, particularly with regard to expressive writing and that both the quality and quantity of students' writing needs improvement. What of their attitudes to writing? One American author observed that:

> No intense scientific study is necessary to reveal some very significant and disturbing facts about writing in junior high school. Junior high school students hate to write...writing is viewed as extremely painful, a demon to avoided.
>
> (Redd,1970,p12)

Yet this is the time when students should be gaining the maximum from their writing, supposedly having mastered the basics of expression which might have hindered fluency of expression. The same author goes on to hint at what could be going wrong:

> Very few students can recouperate from the wounds inflicted by the red pencil. When the student views the bloodied remains of his effort to produce what the teacher asked, his predictable response is to give up the battle as hopeless, a lost cause.

It becomes apparent that in attitude learning and modification, teachers play a crucial role, particularly when applied to writing if one considers that: "in the school context the teacher is the prime instigator of most of the writing done by students" (Jeffery,1981,p215.) Where the teacher is important, is in instilling positive attitudes towards writing in his/her students.

Several authors have suggested how student attitude to writing can be enhanced. Students need to be shown that they can write, that success is possible: "They must realize that their thoughts are taken seriously"(Redd,1970,p19) and that teachers do not want to control or organize them. Honest expression of ideas must be valued. Another author has suggested that writing must be given status in the school community and places responsibility for this into the hands of the teacher: "To convince students to take writing seriously, their adult models...need to demonstrate that writing does in fact matter in adult life"(Highway One).

4. Journals and the Writing Process

If we accept the idea that "writing is a hunt, an exploration through unknown terrain by writers to find out what they are really thinking" (Gower,1981,p18), then what form of writing helps students in this process of self discovery? Educationalists have established the value of journals in capturing ideas, recording observations, details which can be used later by the student as sources for individual topics for writing. Journal writing can provide "a context in which children can participate in the writing process" (Baker). The context is one where they decide what to write, when, carry out exploration of thought and feeling in writing at their own pace. In doing so "they can learn to trust their authentic voices and to entrust what they have written to their readers" (Baker). The writing experience becomes a process which benefits the whole person as students begin to understand themselves better: "Writing is but a means to an end...a part of making oneself a whole person, of gaining knowledge by experience, of learning."(Gower,1981,p17) Because of this, the quantity of writing is high, as students are writing for themselves. As one educationalist noted in relation to an adult class of retired students he taught:

> ...I had great problems getting these students out of my classroom each week and I had even greater problems keeping up with the amount of writing they produced. Any student can find the same outlet through the use of a journal.

Dialogue Journals and the Writing Process

Dialogue Journals extend the benefits obtained from journal writing because they provide contact with a sympathetic, supportive model - the teacher - who writes back a "return" entry, based on the student's initial writing. The fact that the teacher does not "correct" the student's writing shows to the student that his/her writing is being taken seriously and this feeling of success can lead to an improved attitude towards writing.

An interesting Australian study on letter writing noted that: "many of the comments in the letters functioned to make the reading partner feel sufficiently confident and encouraged to reply to the letter" (Arnold,1982,p34). The process is similar in dialogue journal writing. In writing to the student's dialogue journal entry, the teacher can be seen as endorsing the student's self-esteem. This is crucial in improving student's writing because:

> It seems from observation and interviews with pupil writers that one's self-concept as a writer depends largely on one's positive image as a writer. That is, a pupil who sees him/herself as a 'bad' writer is inclined not to see him/her self as not a writer at all.
>
> (Arnold,1981,p35)

By improving a pupil's self-esteem (defined by the author as "the sum of evaluations held for the self"), a teacher, through dialogue journals, could help students improve their attitude to writing and flowing from this, their actual writing itself. The teacher provides the supportive framework (and model) from which the students can increasingly take risks in finding new language forms and structures. This confroms with Applebee's notion of "the ideal instructional situation" where: "students would gradually take on more difficult writing tasks, with appropriate scaffolding that would gradually be withdrawn".(Applebee,1980, p.38)

Furthermore, because the focus is on the process and not the product, dialogue journals help students avoid looking at writing as a service skill and demonstrate instead: "the potential of writing as a special mode of disciplined thinking, as a powerful form of learning" (Walshe, 1982,p3). In this way, dialogue dournals help to establish a central place for writing in the curriculum as evidence exists to suggest that where a student's writing improves, teachers note accompanying improvements:

> ...in reading...a growth of general learning confidence, in learning across the curiculum, in learning by ESL children and the so-called remedial cases.(Walshe,1982,p13).

Indeed, one scholar has argued "for the centrality to the whole school programme of autobiographical writing", as, "learning is something that occurs within the individual" (Bentley,1982,p84). He envisages:

> ...A class period called 'Autobiography'. Here the students will sit down at the end of the day, assisted by a sensitive supervisor, and ponder who they are, what they know, what they have learned and where they are going.

This is surely the essence of dialogue journal writing.

THEORIES OF LEARNING

Having investigated the nature of dialogue journals and their relationship to the writing process, it is time to turn our attention to examining how they fit into models of learning and of language learning. In his opening chapter on "The Conditions of Learning", R. Gagne mentions two major learning tasks beginning school children face:

> One is to continue their 'socialization' by learning to interact with other children and adults...to learn to respond appropriately to symbols...the intellectual task of reading, writing and manipulation of numbers.
>
> (Gagne,1965,p25)

Most people would agree that schools are places where children are sent primarily to learn. Consequently, one of the major questions educators should ask is "How do pupils learn?" An understanding of the learning process helps in the creation of effective learning situations which help to maximize student's capacity and ability to learn. Gagne has stated that "How learning operates in everyday school situations is a most valuable kind of understanding" (Gagne 1965, p.25). The main purpose of a learning theory is to explain learning operations and to predict and control the course of learning. Such a theory can provide a guide to planning secondary teaching. How humans learn has been an issue investigated by generations of theorists who have proposed many models. They examined internal conditions necessary for learning such as motivatiion, earlier experiences as well as external conditions such as learning environment; quality,quantity and frequency of instruction. What follows is a brief summary of the main theories of learning. In practice, however, teachers draw on aspects of many theories and evolve their own theory of instruction which they modify throughout their careers.

1. The Stimulus-Response Theory

This theory was formulated by Edward L. Thorndike in the late nineteenth century and drew on earlier associationists who investigated how ideas are formed and linked in the human mind. This theory encompasses learning by trial and error and learning as a conditioned response. Under it, the learning process is gradual and consists of making connections between stimuli and responses and instruction focuses on providing the necessary stimuli to provide the desired responses. A criticism of this theory is that it over-emphasises the external factors controlling the learner and in the classroom, resulting in students that can be passive, where learning is synonymous with programmed instruction, the whole process rapidly becoming meaningless and directionless for the pupil. S-R Theorists also tend to explain learning and complex human behaviour in relatively small and distinct units, rather than using a holistic approach.

2. The Gestalt Theory

Originating in Germany by Max Wertheimer in the early part of this century, this theory maintains that learning takes the form of INSIGHT as when things "click into place" or one discovers a solution to a problem. In this theory the learner actively interacts with the environment in his/her search for meaning.
Unfortunately, this theory ignores the previous experience a learner brings to a learning situation. Furthermore, one cannot learn by insight alone as mathematics and foreign language lessons testify.

3. Learning as Information Processing

Contemporary theories differ from earlier theories which were based on associations formed in response to external stimulii in that they rely on the internal processes to account for learning. Instead, these theories propose that stimulation encountered by the learner is processed in several ways as learning occurs. One exponent of this theory, F.Smith states as his basic assertion that: "The only effective and meaningful way in which anyone can learn is by attempting to relate new experiences to what he knows".(Smith,1975,p.34) Under this model, information from the outside world is received via eye and ear into Short Term Memory (STM) where it is stored until the brain can process it into Long Term Memory (LTM). The ease with which we can process information into LTM depends on how well we can organize new information. Similarly, success in retrieving information from our LTM, Smith sees as "depending on the extent to which the information we seek is integrated...with everything we know." (Smith,1975,p69). He sees the key to better recall in helping people to try to relate what they are doing to what they know already, that is: "In ensuring that he can make some sense of what he is doing (Smith,1975p71-2).

Problems in learning he sees as being related to overloading of the STM with information that is delivered in unrelated fragments. This causes "tunnel vision" -"the consequence of overloading the brain with incoming visual information" (Smith 179). To take another example, Smith says that a child who cannot learn: "may simply be overwhelmed. The gap between what he is trying to do and what he is expected to do may be too great" (Smith,1975,p82).

As a result, under this model of learning, humans are learning all the time. "All humans endeavour to make sense of the world, to comprehend, to learn in the same fundamental manner from birth through adulthood" (Smith,1975,p4). This model of learning seems the most appropriate one because it is the most natural. It is not tied to formal instruction or extrinsic motivationg factors such as rewards. It acknowledges that:

> Learning is a personal matter that varies for different children, proceeds at many different rates, develops best when children are actively engaged in their own learning, takes place in a variety of setting(s...and gain intensity in an environment where children...are taken seriously.
> (Victorian Education Department Ministerial Paper, 1983, p.14)

The Role of the Teacher in the Learning Process

Given the institutionalized nature of schools, the teacher's role is decisive. A recent Victorian Education Department Ministerial Paper noted that: "Teacher/learner relationships are crucial . Without feedback from teachers, students cannot know how well they are developing." (1983,p15) Do students also share this view? Although a study on factors which motivate young people to learn showed that no single factor as dominant, it was clear that older students place a greater emphasis on the teacher making the student want to learn. Farrell concludes that: "The major influence on the learning climate in which a student finds himself is the nature of the relationship he is able to build with each of his teachers."(Farrell in Tronc,1977,p44) He also identifies eight major teaching characteristics which seem to promote positive teacher-student working relationships. They are listed in full as they give a clear picture of the characteristics of an ideal teacher:

1. The teacher directs and guides students.
2. The teacher sees the student as a co-worker on common problems.
3. The teacher gradually encourages and reassures the student.
4. The teacher really tries to understand the student's feelings.
5. The teacher usually maintains rapport with the student.
6. The teacher is sympathetic to the student.

7. The teacher gives and takes in most situations.
(Tronc,1977,p94)

In short, as Smith noted, the teacher's task is to facilitate learning (Smith,1975,p2) and to help people relate what they are doing to what they already know (Smith, 1975,p71-2). Sund and Trowbridge take this even further and suggest that a teacher needs to adopt a "humanistic approach where the teacher's primary role is one of helping students build their 'self-esteem'."(Sund and Trowbridge,1974,p.55) This means that the teacher must view him/herself as a person, not as a bastion of knowledge and s/he must not view a student as an "empty vessel" to be "filled" with knowledge. "The instructor must treat every person as an individual with particular needs at a specific place in time on his path to becoming" (Sund and Trowbridge,1974,p58).

A Student-Centred Learning Programme

If we agree that children have their own unique views of the world inside their heads which they carry around with them all the time and to which they relate all new information, then a teacher must have a learning programme which acknowledges each individual's contribution. The only way to achieve this is to have a student-centred learning programme with a teacher whose instruction is student-centred and who is trying to maintain the eight ideal characteristics. This means the individual, rather than the class is the focus. A student-centred learning programme is achieved when the learner has more control over what is learned.

This is consistent with the Australian Schools Commission statement (1980) on the purposes of education which states that schooling should provide students with "confidence in their power to influence events affecting their lives" and "a sense of their own existence within a continuing culture" (Cole p7). A study completed by Margaret Bride in 1982 on "Young People in Transition" concluded that the most important thing for children leaving school is that they have a sense of their own significance and self- worth and a feeling that their age group is of value.

Dialogue Journal Writing and Learning

Dialogue Journals would seem to provide the ideal medium for ensuring that learning is a process of self-discovery. Students write at their own paces on topics that interests them. The teacher writes back on the same level and guides the student, does not correct or set him/herself up as an authority. They provide an opportunity to develop the good personal relations which are so conducive to learning in a school. At the same time , the personal contact provided by the journals gives plenty of opportunities for support and reassurance and development of a student's "self-esteem". They have they advantage of involving all learners, including students who are normally quiet and withdrawn. With Dialogue Journals, students have the opportunity, so vital to learning, "to see how something is done" (Smith,1975,p.8), as the teacher's writing becomes the model for the student and the next day's journal entry gives the student a chance to do the same.

Writing skills are developed through dialogue journals as students are learning to write by writing, as their primary aim is on communicating meaning, rather than surface generalities. The nature of the writing is not mechanical or informational, but expressive. By making the relationship between teacher and student secure, dialogue journals assist the learner down the path to greater learning.

THEORIES OF LANGUAGE LEARNING

This section will examine several theories of language acquisition, the relationship between language learning and literacy and finally it will attempt to place dialogue journals in a model of language learning.

If we accept the proposition that "every human purpose or function has a linguistic correlative" (Holdaway,p14), then central to any model of learning must be a theory of language learning. One author has succinctly described a matrix between teaching, learning and language: "language is central to the interaction of teaching and learning that produces knowing." (Smith,Goodman,Meredith,p428)Indeed, so crucial and complex is the relationship between the three that another author has stated that: "The more we learn about language development, the less we understand how it works...language acquisition is a crucial test for any theory of learning."(Dale,1972,p.61)

One of the most challenging and fascinating puzzles which has intrigued educationalists and theorists over the centuries, has been how humans acquire their knowledge of language. It appears that most young children acquire language effortlessly and have developed near-adult complex language systems by the time they reach school.

Although first attempts at systematic observations of children's language acquisition began last century, the issue continues to challenge researchers. As Noam Chomsky noted: "When we study human language, we are approaching what some might call the 'human essence', the distinctive qualities of mind that are, so far as we know, unique to man." (Chomsky,1968,p.100).

Imitation and Reinforcement

This has been called the "common sense " theory of language acquisition because it is easily observable and quantifiable.(Dale,1972p137) It comprises of three processes: imitation which becomes a source for new linguistic forms; practice where the child repeats what he/she has heard in his/her free speech; reinforcement where a parent teaches a child through approval or disapproval which forms are appropriate.

Although this theory seems neat, it abounds in weaknesses. Smith points out that language cannot be learnt by imitation alone since surface structure does not directly represent meaning and a child's first concern is with meaning, followed by sounds and grammar (Smith,1975, p.45). It also seems unlikely that a child would wait for an adult to say the word he wants before he uses it himself. This theory also implies that a child's first talk is "babble" or "baby talk" until it nears adult approximation, which is clearly false when one examines the errors children make in their early speech. Grammatical over-generalizations resulting in errors such as "comed" and "doed" indicate that children are forging their own active hypothesis of language. Children rarely imitate an adult language model word for word: they almost always reformulate what they hear. Finally, for this theory to be universal, a child would have had to heard every sentence before he uttered at and given the variety of sentences possible, this is clearly an impossibility.

Language as Rule-Governed Behaviour

Under this theory it is assumed that: "A person who knows a language has mastered a system of rules that asssigns sound and meaning in a different way for an infinite class of possible sentences" (Chomsky,1968,p103). Since children can utter sentences they have never heard before, these theorists believe that what children acquire is the underlying pattern. McNeill developed the following model:

corpus of speech → LAD → grammatical system

(Oldfield,Marshall,1968,p23)

LAD stands for Linguistic Acquisition Device and stands for an abstract concept by which children have a built-in capacity to select grammatically important words, in fact stripping adult language of its inessentials. Thus when a child has internalized a grammatical rule, s/he can begin processing and producing his/her own.

A basic criticism of this theory is that it assumes that children have an innate capacity to search for a linguistic rule and that this basic drive comes before the search for meaning. Recent studies, however, indicate the reverse, that a child's basic drive comes from a search for meaning: "The child does not begin learning language to exploit it so much as to comprehend it." (Smith,1975,p.110). The movement towards language production is then from deep structure to surface structure. In other words, the child does not take meaning from language, rather s/he brings meaning to it. (Smith p.91) This is particularly important when one realizes that meaning does not rest in a surface structure alone: the listener must supply the meaning him/herself.(Smith, 1975,p91)

Language Learning as a Cognitive Act

Contrary to theories which see language learning as a process of imitation or rule formation, is the theory that "language learning is ultimately a cognitive matter" (Moffat, 1968,p.15). It is based on the theory that "learning is what the brain does naturally, continually" (Smith,1975,p108). In other words, children are learning all the time and the brain is continually updating its understanding of the world. Smith sees that meaning comes before production and that the child's first interest is with the deep structure of language, that is, meaning, then s/he looks for the appropriate surface structure, sounds/grammar, to express that meaning. In this way "a child teaches himself to talk"(Smith,1975,p174). Every sentence produced is a hypothesis about how language works and the whole process of acquisition of the complete adult language system is thus gradual and continuous throughout childhood. Smith also points out that we must not assess a child's language development on the basis of what they can produce, as a child can comprehend much more: "All of us understand sentences we could not posssible produce" (Smith p116).

This is not to deny the importance of other people who provide the source of information for the learning child, but it should be remembered that it is what the child does with it, that is the most important thing. In short, this model sees language acquisition as part of a natural learning process. The process a child has been using since birth by which s/he makes sense of the world is all that is needed to make sense of language as well. (Smith,1975,p.92)

Language Learning and Literacy

It is an unfortunate fact that the instinctiveness of spoken language learning is often not applied to the acquisition of major literacy of reading and writing. Educationalists have tended to separate the latter and consider them as highly complex, unnatural skills which must be taught. However, in his book, "The Oral Foundations of Literacy", Holdaway has suggested that: "we cannot be justified in dismissing the relevance of early language acquisition for literacy learning unless we have been assured by rigid trials that literacy cannot be acquirred in the same manner." (Holdaway,p20) As such trials have not been conducted, Holdaway suggests that: "literacy skills develop in the same natural way as spoken language when the conditions for learning are comparable." He then outlines a developmental model of learning which can be applied to literacy learning which is characterized by:

> 1. Immersion in an environment where skill is being used in purposeful ways.
> 2. Beginning where the child is at and drawing on existing linguistic

knowledgea child has.

3. Environment that is emulative, supportive.

4. Every approximation is rewarded.

5. Bad approximations are not reinforced.

6. Learning task is determined by the learner.

Dialogue Journals and Language Learning

Dialogue journal writing is compatible with both Holdaway's developmental model and the theory of language acquisition as a cognitive act. The writing students underetake in their journals is at their own pace and of a standard suitable to their level. They are not expected to perform to a higher level than they are capable of. The writing occurs in a supportive framework of an established relationship with the teacher. The teacher does not assess or penalize writing, but his/her writing acts as a model to guid the student. In this way the techer helps his pupils "to use language to organize experience in a new way."(Barnes,Britton,1969,p.61) Because the writing is daily, there is plenty of opportunity to practice and gain confidence in using language in a productive manner.

The dialogue nature of the writing closely approximates oral language and helps to unlock the seemingly overpoweringly complex task writing can appear to beto many students. It helps them to remember that: "writing is written down speech"(Britton,1970,p.165). In outling his Structure of Discourse, Moffat noted: "The student would learn the skills of operating our symbol system by role-playing first and second persons in all possible relationships that might exist between the student and as subject and between him and a speaker or listener."(Moffat,1968,p10). The worry about conforming to external forms of "correct" writing disappear as students concentrate on meaning, not surface syntax. In this way they realize that writing can be "authentic discourse, a verbal transaction between writer and reader".(Kelly, p.26)

As Barnes noted, there is a special "language of secondary education", akin to textbooks, official documents, public debates and meetings which dominate secondary classes, but: "this is not a dominant register of language whch teachers are aware of...and are unaware of any problems which its use may add to their pupils' tasks in learning"(Barnes,1969,p54). Through the dialogue journals, students in secondary school can begin to: "Bridge the gap between 'natural' or everyday social language interaction and the language of instruction"(Reynolds,1983,p23), in a constructive manner.

ADOLESCENTS AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

To fully understand the nature of this study, it is vital to consider the nature of the students we are dealing with. Western society is unique in having a phenomenon absent from more primitive societies: the period from 13-18 years (or 21), called adolescence, which marks the transition from childhood to adulthood. In our society, the transition is gradual and rites of passage have been abolished, whereas in other societies, the rites are clear and the transition is abrupt.

However, there is no doubt that this period of enormous physical and emotional growth, is frought with difficulties for our students as they take on the responsibilities of adulthood. Some of the developmental tasks of adolescents include:

1. Gaining emotional independence of parents and other adults.
2. Developing an individual set of values and ethics.
3. Developing physique and body use.
4. Achieving new relationships with age mates of both sexes.
5. Gaining a measure of economic

independence.

6. Preparing for marriage/family life.

7. Development of intellectual skills and concepts for community life.

8. Development of socially responsibile behaviour.

The above could be considered "the basic dimensions around which all adolescent behaviour revolves." (Hoover,1968,p5) Because of the enormity of the above tasks the adolescent must come to grips with, the following may be considered a short list of the basic needs of teenagers:

1. Safety needs such as freedom from threatening situations.

2. Belongingness and love needs.

3. Esteem needs of self respect/achievement/satisfaction.

4. Self-actualizing needs, the highest of which is the desire for self-fulfilment.

(Hoover,1968,P2)

What happens when one places the above into the context of a secondary school? Too often the answer is disaster, as one author noted:

> Research has established that large numbers of secondary students are alienated from the school schene in many ways. The older they are, the more alienated they seem to become.
>
> (Callinen in Tronc,1977)

Another author says: "Schooling, all to often, fails to give them a sense of growth, emergence, becoming adult" (Hemming,1980,p3). Traditional schooling with its narrow, academic emphasis on knowledge-based syllabi, competitive, exam-based assessment, fails to see the person behind the learning approach and "leaves the actual powers of the adolescents themselves largely untapped" (Hemming,1980,p15). Unfortunately, traditional schools dominate, as one author noted:

> There never was an educational revolution in Victoria....an intelligent guess is that it is about one third highly traditional, one third modified traditional, one third mildly progressive.
>
> (Schoenheimer in Tronc,1977,p4)

How can this situation be remedied so that secondary schools acknowledge the adolescents' emergence, drawing them into responsibility for their own education and development, helping them to feel good about themselves as people? To answer this one needs to look back to our theories of learning. If we accept that "learning gets its vitality from its relationship to life" (Hemming, 1980,p21) and that: "A modern instructional theory should have at its foundation a commitment to build the self-concept of the students" (Sund and Trowbrige, 1974,p13), then secondary education must seek to develop the individual's self-concept. This can be defined as: "The theory of qualities that the individual attributes to himself in varying situations" (Snyder,1976,p.371). The school helps in the development of the adolescent as a thinking individual with a healthy, balanced personality. The teacher's role is then to suport the adolescent, to help students develop their systems of values.

Dialogue Journals and Secondary Education

To achieve these goals, a school must "accept the existence of the pupils' private worlds and to form a bridge between them and what the school has to offer" (Hemming,1980,p9), Effective communication is essential, but how many opportunities for such communication exist in the secondary school? Each student has seven or eight teachers, meeting them only for 45 -60 minutes at a time, the only stable element being the student's own form group. It is therefore hardly surprising that most students seek understanding primarily from their own peer group.

Dialogue journals can provide a vehicle for effective communication and it can help bridge the gap between the two in a way that is supportive, helps individuals gain a sense of significance and thus increased confidence. This allows adolescents to explore and be supported in their personal introspections. They provide avenues for the development of personal competence which is:

> unlikely to be achieved by too much tutelage and by too much spoonfeeding of the mind. Communication is more likely to grow in a context which combines freedom to develop, encouragement to think for yourself, commitment to what is felt to be personally significant.
>
> (Hemming,1980,p42)

Dialogue journals provide for student-centred education and can lead to more "humane schools" . Interestingly, they do not clash with an existing academic programme.

They can complement it as:

> If students are helped to develop better personally at the stage of growth they have reached, there is every possibility that their exam results will be better and their potential for future development will be increased.
>
> (Dobson in Tronc,1977,p37)

What dialogue journals offer is "development by social interaction" (Britton,1970,p224) and the self-expression which they encourage develops the adolescent's self-worth.

Conclusion

This concludes the review of theoretical literature connected with the study. To what extent the theoretical assumptions are valid will be borne out by the remainder of the study. Chapter III outlines the Narrative of the Study. Chapter IV presents the results of the study with related discussions. Chapter V concludes the study with a discussion of the findings, classroom implications and directions for further research.

CHAPTER THREE

NARRATIVE OF THE STUDY

This Chapter describes:

1. How the subjects were selected.
2. The research procedure.
3. Establishing a Framework for Analysis
4. Methods of Analysis Used
5. Problems and limitations of the study.

How the Subjects were Selected

To keep the sample group manageable, a small sample of students were selected from a Grade 10 English group of 26 students. A total of nine students were selected as representative of three groups of abilities: above-average, average, below-average. Three students were selected from each group. The aim of the differing levels was to have a representative sample of students upon which to base the study. Students from these three groups would also be representative of the typical "mixed abilities" classroom most English teachers face today.

The basis for selecting the students was teacher judgement. This was not a difficult matter as many of the students had been English pupils of the researcher for two consecutive years and they were thus well-known to the researcher. The teacher's judgement was supported by the students' academic results for the previous two term's work in English. Thus, above-average students were A-Grade level; average students were C-Grade level; below-average students were E-Grade level. The academic assessment in English was based on the Grading scheme used by all teachers throughout the high school. This meant that A represented a result of 80% and above; C represented a result of 60-70% and E represented a result of below 50%. It should be noted that these are academic results and do not necessarily refect the true abilities of these students.

A further criteria used in selecting subjects, was keeping a balance between the sexes. However, an even number was not strictly possible because the total number of students was nine. The following Table gives a Student Profile:

TABLE I

Student Profile

Grade Level: Ten

Ages: 16: Four 15: Five
Sex: Boys: Five Girls: Four
Ethnic Background: Anglo-Saxon: Nine
Academic Ability:
Above-average: 3 Average: 3 Below-average: 3

The Research Procedure

Preparing The Way

Permission to conduct the research was first sought because of the personal nature of the journals and to give parents and students a chance to withdraw their child, should they feel the research would interfere with their child's normal studies. A letter was sent home outlining the purpose and nature of the study and permission from both parent and child to conduct the study was sought.(See Appendix 1) Permission was granted by all parents but one who thought that her child's reports for the previous half year were poor and didn't want to have anything which might interfere with the child's studies. Consequently, another student from a similar ability group was selected and permission given.

In general, most parents were appreciative of the extra interest taken in their child and were most supportive of any extra opportunities their child would have for extra writing. This opinion was particularly voiced by parents of weaker students in informal discussions with the researcher. After data collection, a further notice requesting permission to photo-copy or to quote from the journals in the study was sought and given. Students were assured that at no time would their actual names be used and to secure this, they each selected a pseudonym for use by the researcher.

Although seeking permission to conduct the research meant that the students were aware of the study being conducted, thus possibly "contaminating" the study, the granting of permission was considered essential because the study was conducted in a State high school during school hours, and also because of the highly personal nature of the journals. The knowledge that the study was being conducted didn't seem to inhibit the students who looked forward to the involvement and to the chance to extend their writing. Once confidentiality was assured and the purpose of the study outlined (i.e., to assist the researcher with her College studies), students readily involved themselves without self-consciousness.

Presenting the Journals

To make sure that all students started on the journals at the same time, subjects were asked to attend a lunch-time meeting. As part of the study sought to investigate the impact of dialogue journals on student attitudes to writing, students were asked to complete two attitude questionnares. They were informal measures: The "Writing Interview" developed by Atwell (1977) and revised by Harste and Burke. (See Appendix 2). The other was an informal "Writing Attitude Inventory" compiled by the researcher (See Appendix 3). Two were used to gain a better measure of students' attitudes to writing. The former asked specific questions and required written answers; the latter was intended to cover areas not assessed by the first and was in the form of a series of statements to which students needed only to circle the appropriate response.

After this, the students were given out their journals which consisted of a 64 page, 8mm exercise book. They were told to regard these as their personal property in which they were to make their journal entries sometime during the school day. Except for the first entry made that lunchtime, students were not given a block of time during English or any other class in which to write in their journals. It was their responsibility to find the time, but it was made clear to them that they could use some of their English lessons (held daily except for Fridays) in which to write, if they wished. This would then mean that they would have to catch up on the work missed in the normal English programme in their own time. Although this was somewhat hard on the students, the researcher felt that to have given them any other extra time would have encroached on their normal lessons and possibly jeopardized their studies. This possibility had to be avoided as the letter to the parents stated that this would clearly not occur.

The remaining procedure was explained to the students. A special place was set aside in the staffroom for the collection of journals by the researcher every night and their return to the students every morning. One reliable student was appointed as monitor to collect the journals and distribute them to the rest of the subjects first thing every morning. Students would then write their return entries and when completed, place their journals in the special basket set aside.

Students were encouraged to write whenever they felt they needed to communicate and to feel total freedom about what they could write. No topics were prescribed and the researcher tried to give students the feeling that it was their journal and they could write about what they liked. Absolute privacy on the part of the researcher was guaranteed so that students could write in security and to establish an atmosphere of trust. A minimum threshold of one paragraph a day was established, a paragraph being about one hundred lines.

The researcher's task was to read through each student's entry every night and write a return entry based on the student's writing. The researcher took care to respond positively to whatever students had written, but in general did not control or circumscribe her writing. The researcher wrote not as a teacher, but as an interested, involved co-writer, who wrote in response to the students. In general, the researcher sought to respond positively to any information/ideas forwarded by the subject and to ask questions where further clarification was needed. In this way the intentions between the students' and researcher's writing were kept parallel. In general the researcher attempted to maintain similar values in dialogue journal communication to those used by the teacher, Mrs. R., in the Staton study. They were: openness and genuiness of expression; interaction; willingness to discuss problems. (Staton, p26-7,1982). These were the values by which the researcher guided her own writing and which she tried to maintain as a standard for the students.

The study was conducted over a period of four weeks and a total of fifteen entries were made by both students and researcher. At this point all the students were gathered together again and were asked to complete the two attitude inventories which had been administed at the start of the study and a third self-evaluation of the dialogue journal writing. (See Appendix 4) This self-evaluation was in the form of an open-ended questionnaire where students were asked to respond to twenty questions about their experience of dialogue journal writing. The purpose of the surveys taken at the start and end of the study were to give the researcher a "before" and "after" picture of the students' attitudes to writing. The journals were then collected and results were analysed. The procedure or analysing the journals is fully outlined elsewhere in this Chapter.

Establishing a Framework for Analysis

One of the first problems the researcher faced was how to approach the extremely varied and intricate nature of the data. The issue was compounded by the large body of writing involved: nine students each writing daily entries multiplied by fifteen entries, meant a minimum of one hundred and thirty-five interactions, all with a minimum of one paragraph each, many with a great deal more. Furthermore, one only has to read the first entry by each student to realize that this kind of writing is different. As Staton noted in her study: "Unlike much student written composition, dialogue journal writing does not have a single, focused objective against which all students' writing can be measured." (Staton, p63,1982)

In what ways are dialogue journals different? Staton identified four attributes peculiar to dialogue journals which determined the kinds of analyses which would work.

1. The writing is interactive: This means it must be studied in the context of the interaction, similar to analysis of oral discourse.
2. Topics occur simultaneously: Entries included many different topics, either new or continued:

student-initiated or teacher-initiated as compared with the single-topic focus of traditional essay writing.

3. Classification must follow function, not form: As students are writing primarily to communicate, a strictly grammatical analysis would not be appropriate because it does not take the intent behind the structure into account.

4. Changes occur at multiple levels of discourse across time.

Because of the interactive, communicative nature of the writing, traditional composition research methods such as holistic ratings of coherence, T-units and so on, would be unsuitable. The nature of the writing in these journals thus meant to the Staton team that they had to find new units of analysis which tended towards "discourse analysis methods" (Staton, p.56,1982).

Staton finally defined as units of analysis four levels of communication:

1. Words
2. Sentences
3. Discourse within turn (single entry)
4. Discourse across turns (entries)

(Staton, p.60,1982)

These enabled the researchers to look at spelling, language functions, topic introduction, topic elabouration, mutuality-building conversations, problem discussions, topic continuation, development of topic understanding. In the Staton study, different representative samples of student writing were selected for intensive study such as the comparison of students' writing in Spring and Autumn.

This study acknowledges the framework for analyses adopted by the Staton study, but as this study is on a smaller scale, it will take as units of analysis only two of the four levels of communication:

1. Words
2. Discourse within turn:
    - topic introduction
    - topic elabouration

Although the time-scale in this study is not as great as in the Staton study, where comparisons between Fall and Spring entries were possible, this study has sought to make comparisons between the first five entries and the last five entries (out of a total of fifteen entries) of each student. This enabled the researcher to make some comparative studies over the four-week duration of the study, albeit a limited one.

Developing a Focus for Analysis

As mentioned previously, the large body of interactive writing presents a daunting task to the researcher. Even with the framework for analysis established, it is difficult to find a place to start. How did Staton tackle this problem?Once the data had been gathered, her team began by reading the individual journals straight through to develop an overall view and to fully understand the meaning of the experience to the participants. This then raised a series of questions which were later identified as promising features for analysis. Ten questions were formulated which gave the researchers a focus for their analysis. (Staton, p55-56,1982) From those ten, two have been selected as the focus for this study. They are:

> 6. What kinds of topics do students write about, and do their topics change as the year progresses?
>
> 7. Do students write "more" as the year progresses and they come to know the teacher better, or less?
>
> 9. What properties does dialogue journal writing share with oral conversation and what properties with the kinds of written discourse valued in schools (usually called "expository" writing?

However, these questions had to be adapted to suit this particular study which was conducted over a four-week period, rather than a year and where these questions would be inappropriate to ask in their exact form. Therefore, the focus for analysis in this study became:

1. Do students write more as the number of entries increase?
2. What kinds of topics do students write about and do their topics change over the duration of the study?
3. How much do students elaborate in their writing and do they elaborate more over the duration of the study?
4. What is their attitude to writing and to dialogue journal writing and do students' attitudes to writing change over the duration of the study?

The third question is an adaption of Staton's general question 9 and was included to shed light on the depth and intensity of the topics students chose to write about. The fourth question is not specifically covered by the Staton study. The researcher focused on the above four areas for specific analysis because they related particularly to changes in the quality and quantity of student writing, as well as attitudes to writing, all central to the aim of this study: todocument and describe the dialogue journal writing of nine secondary students. It should be noted that many other areas could have been analysed. The Staton study, for example, being a study on a much larger scale, examined many other worthwhile areas such as: Analysis of Language Functions; The Function of Questions; The Function of Complaining; Spelling; Written Dialogue as a Basis for Student-teacher Rapport, to name but a few.

Methods of Analysis Used

The first four areas under investigation acknowledge the framework for analysis established by the Staton Study as set out in the Research Papers, Nos. 2, 6, 10. (Staton,1982, Vol. II). In what follows, the method of analysis for each of the four areas under investigation is described separately. As preparation for the detailed analysis, all entries were numbered: S1, Student Entry 1; T1, Teacher Entry 1. Then each entry for each student was read, topics defined and marked out as T1, T2 for Topic 1 and Topic 2, and so on. This enabled the analysis to proceed smoothly and accurately.

1. Do students write more as the number of entries increase?

To achieve a simple gauge of the quantity of writing produced by each stduent, an approximate word count per entry per student was taken. Figures for all nine students over fifteen entries were tabled. For comparative purposes, the average number of words per entry was also made for each student and from all students. The highest number and lowest number of words per entry were then easily identified and circled in different colours on the table, red for the longest entry, blue for the shortest.

2. What kinds of topics do students write about and do their topics change over the four-week duration?

The focus of this analysis was qualitative rather than quantitative. Although the number of topics was noted, concern was more as to what each student's choice of topic was. The first task was to classify each student's journal writing under the topics they wrote about. Topics were defined largely by the way students "named" them. Particular care was taken to distinguish between peripheral information included with a topic and the topic itself. For example, Jane's first entry reads:

> Sitting in C6 at the moment and trying to think of something to write, but I can. (sic) There is so much noise outside which is disturbing me. I can never write when there is a lot of noise.

Although Jane tells us about her environment and her personal preferences, the central topic remains "writing".

Topics students wrote about over their fifteen entries were then entered into a topic chart. (See Appendix 5) A mark "X" denotes a topic that students wrote about that day. Where students made two different references to the same topic which still occurred within the same entry, although not consecutively, the same topic was marked "X"2. Topics were divided into three broad categories, each category itself was further subdivided into six or seven topics. The three broad categories were: Academic and School; Interpersonal/Social; Personal/Individual. These were defined by the Staton study where it was found that: "the three domains of topic focus that we found in the journals typify the major 'developmental tasks' which early adolescents are impelled to master" (Staton, 1982,p76). The first relates to a student gaining more independence in learning about and acting on the world (Academic and School); the second task is to develop interpersonal relationships (Interpersonal/Social); the third is to develop a healthy self-concept (Personal/Individual). A move from Academic to Personal would thus mean a major developmental step and a corresponding growth in maturity. While this study uses the three major topic areas defined by the Staton study, individual topics under each area are different. An explanation of the topics used in this study follows.

In area one, Academic and School, the focus for all topics is school and education. School subjects included any reference to a subject such as English. Passing and failing were given a category each, as some students talked about passing the year, others about failing. School activities outside the classroom meant anything concerning the general running of the school and activities outside classes. Classwork includes any specific work mentioned, such as essays, work done in class. Attitude to school included positive or negative comments made by the students about attending school, such as "I hate school".

In area two, the topics include relationships with other people. Sport included any sporting acitivity mentioned by the students. Career/work means students' ideas about future careers they might take up after leaving school and also references made to outside, casual employment they were engaged in, or hope to undertake. Peers meant the students' friends both in and out of school. Writing/Journals covered both student references to writing in the dialogue journals and general comments made about writing. This was not placed in the Academic category because of the interactive nature of journal writing and because most references students made to writing were not necessarily related to schoolwork. Teachers were also included under the Interpersonal area because students usually talked about how they related to a teacher. The final area in this category was moral/social issues which covered any broad social topic, such as Euthanasia etc.

Area three covered personal and individual topics. These included topics about the student's family, home activities, hobbies, activities during the weekend or weeknight, likes or dislikes. Evaluation of the day referred to students' summaries of a day's events. Self-reflection refers to the students' evaluations of themselves - their attitude, values, deep personal problems not related to a specific category. These were considered to be stronger than mere likes/dislikes.

Once these tables had been completed for each student, individual totals for each topic referred to by each student were made into a Table showing the total number of times particular topics were referred to by all students. Then the total of topics in each of the three major topic areas for all students were made and entered into a Table.

This gave a percentage of topics for each student and for all students for the three topic categories, Academic, Interpersonal and Personal. Finally, for purposes of comparison to see if topics changed over the duration of the study, the first five entries and the last five entries of each students' dialogue journal was made, according to the three topic categories mentioned above.

3. How much do students elaborate in their writing and do they elaborate more over the duration of the study?

This analysis attempts to measure the amount of discourse in the students' writing. The purpose behind this analysis is to see whether dialogue journal writing "bears a resemblance to the elaborated, connected, topic-focused expository writing which our culture values and emphasises in writing instruction". (Staton,1982,Vol.II,p.2) The definition of elaboration is that used in the Staton study: "the giving of more specific information about a phenomenon which the writer considers necessary for the audience to know" (Staton,1982,Vol.IIp.3). As well as attempting to gauge the degree to which students elaborate in their writing, this analysis is also concerned with qualitative differences in their elaboration. The type of elaboration is noted and used as an indication of the students' thinking and the depth and intensity of their writing. Elaboration in writing is highly regarded because unlike the spoken word, there are no supplementary systems for conveying information, so the more explicit the information, the more communicative it is, although too much detail means that the communication is useless. The nature of the elaboration must be such that it strikes to the essence of the writer's intent. In general, it can be said that maturer writers have a greater degree of elaboration in their work and the nature of that elaboration is one of stating the general meaning or significance of a topic, not just the addition of more details.

The method adopted was as follows. Each entry was examined and all topics mentioned by the students were marked as T1, Topic 1; T2, Topic 2 and so on. The sentences under each topic were then numbered for each topic and for every entry with S1, Sentence 1 etc. After this had been done, the topics which had not been elaborated were evident. For the purposes of this analysis, a topic which continued beyond the first introductory sentence and a second one into a third, fourth or fifth one, was considered to be elborated. One or two sentence topics were not considered to be elaborated. The elaborated topics were then marked on a coding chart with an "X" (See Appendix 6), under the heading "Topic". All sentences under the elaborated topic were then categorised into three headings: Details, Comparison/Contrast, General Principle. This enabled the researcher to distinuish between statements which simply added further details from those that gave a meaningful summary on what the topic meant to the writer. This then gave an indications of the quality of the elaboration produced by the student.

It is essential to now describe in detail the three headings used, how topics were placed under these headings and examples of each.

1. Details.

This involved the reporting of information by naming or describing actions/actors/objects when a student elaborated. Its function is to give information the writer considers relevant and new to a topic. For example:

> I agree with you about fitness and I do not let it get in the road of my studies.(S1,T2: Topic introduction, Personal Opinion, Actions, Actors, Objects)
>
> I go down every night from four to six o'clock, have dinner then I do my homework.(S2,T2: Actions, Actors, Objects)

> I have been going for the last five months now and it is becoming adictive becouse if I don't go I feel like I have not completed my day. (S3,T2: Actions, Actors, Objects, Comparison/Contrast, Classification, General Principle)
>
> Do you play any sport of any kind? (S4,T2: Actions, Actors, Objects)

From this example of a student's topic elaboration, one can see how a series of details are given and after a few sentences, the quality of elaboration intensifies to include comparison and the statement of the general meaning of a topic, then back again to the inclusion of details. This type of movement outwards and then back in again was frequent in students' elaborated writing.

2. Articulation of relationship

This occurred when a student compared one even to another by stating similarities or differences, or by classifying an instance of some more general class. The function of this type of elaboration was to establish a relationship between a specific topic and other experiences in the writer's world. Linguistic cues were often words such as "than", "like", "different". An example which included elaboration from this category is given above.

3. General Principle

This meant making explicit, reflective statements about the "meaning" of a topic by stating an underlying proposition such a general social concept or principle. Its function is to make explicit an underlying proposition. Linguistic cues were such words as "because", "but". To consider another example:

> I think people have the right to die, relating to the reports on the news. (S1,T1: Details, General Principle: people have the right to die)
>
> If you are put on a machine, just to keep you alive, and can't do anything anyway, that is cruel. (S2,T1: Details, Comparison, Classification)
>
> Everyone says that it's a free country and you should be able to do whatever you want to do with your life, so why do they stop you from killing yourself? (S3,T1: Details, Comparison,General Principle)

Once the data had been coded, the number of elaborated topics compared with the number of topics could be made and the number of elaborated topics which fell into the three areas of Details, Comparison, General Principle, could be made.This information was converted into percentages and tables were made to show the degree of elaboration for all students across all entries, a qualitative breakdown of all elaborated topics into the three possible areas, a comparison of the elaborated topics for the first five and last five entries for each student.

4. What is the students' attitude to writing and dialogue journal writing and do their attitudes to writing change over the duration of the study?

As mentioned previously in this Chapter, three measures were used to determine students' attitudes to writing. There were applied immediately "before" and "after" the study and were designed to complement each other. The first was "The Writing Interview" developed by Atwell (1977) and revised by Harste and Burke.
This survey is open-ended and asks specific questions about the writing process and attitudes to writing which require written answers.

The second survey was an "Attitude to Writing Inventory" compiled by the researcher.
This is in the form of a series of statements bout writing to which students need only circle the appropriate

responses which varied from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree".

A third attitude measure was the "Student Self-Evaluation of Dialogue Journal Writing", also compiled by the researcher. This was also an open-ended questionnaire where students could write answers at length.

After these had been completed, the information was written up verbatim where possible, or else abbreviated. For "The Writing Interview", all the "before" comments are given in the left hand column and where these differ in the "after" survey, these answers are given in the "after" column. For the "Attitude to Writing Inventory", the number of responses in each column for both "before" and "after" are given in separate columns. The results of the "Student Self-Evaluation to Dialogue Dialogue Journal Writing" are given verbatim where possible.

Limitations of the Study

The study had several limitations which were concerned with:

The artificial nature of the study.
The duration of the study.
The difficulty of establishing regular writing habits during the school day.
The Researcher's familiarity with the students.

The artificial nature of the Study

Because students had never experienced this form of writing before, it meant that the context of the study was somewhat artificial. Keeping a journal was unfamiliar to them and even more unusual was the experience of having a teacher write back to them on equal terms. They were somewhat baffled as to the purpose of the study and as to why someone should take particular interest in them or their writing. By way of explanation they were told that the researcher needed the data to fulfil a requirement for a College Diploma and they readily accepted this. Further explanation as to what would be analysed (e.g., topics, word length etc.) was not given because the researcher felt that it might preempt the students' writing too much.

It was difficult to avoid the feeling that the study was imposed on the students by the needs of the researcher (also their classroom teacher), rather than truly arising out of their needs, or out of established classroom practice. Compared with the Staton study, these dialogue journals were not "deeply embedded in the life of this classroom" (Staton, p21.,1982). However, given a longer duration of the study, this might have been possible. The limitation which arose was thus concerned with the extent to which the writing produced was meaningful to the studenta or whether they were writing to please the researcher. Unfortunately, both this and the extent to which the awareness that the study was being conducted affected the study, cannot be accurately determined.

The duration of the Study

This study was conducted over a four week period and a total of fifteen entries were gathered. The researcher recognises that generalizations made from such a short study are necessarily limited and must therefore be tentative. It is difficult to establish changes in attitudes to writing over such a short time-span. A truer picture would have emerged from a longer study of say, one semester's duration, or even better, a year's duration. In conducting her study, Jana Staton used data collected over a whole school year (Staton,p.36,1982). However, trends which emerge from this study could be valid and give an indication at the very least, of what a study conducted over a longer duration could also achieve.

The difficulty of establishing regular writing habits during the school day.

One problem the researcher faced was when the students would find time to write in their journals. The parallel study conducted by Jana Staton was conducted in a primary school where the students had the one teacher for the entire day. In a secondary classroom this is not possible. Students have a minimum of five different teachers in one day. Although the researcher taught the students for English, there were only four scheduled English lessons in the week, not five, so time could not be taken out of the English lesson consistently. Apart from this there was the problem of what to do with the other seventeen students who were not part of the study. As mentioned earlier, the researcher had to also guarantee that the students' normal studies would not be interruped by the study.

The only solution seemed to be to give the students responsibility for finding their own time to write, such as in between periods while they were waiting for their class teacher to arrive, or at recess or lunchtime. Although several students indicated that they would have liked to do so, it was impossible to allow the students to take home their journals because the time at night was required by the researcher to write a return entry and code data. This situation was less than satisfactory, but the students soon settled down to write in their own time during the school day.

The researcher's familiarity with the students

All the students had been taught previously by the researcher for two years. This meant that the study was on a slightly different basis to that conducted by Jana Staton where dialogue journals were distributed at the start of the year on the first day of class for students to communicate with the teacher. (Staton,p.19,1982). Whereas the teacher in the Staton study took some time to establish rapport with the students, this was not the case with this study. An atmosphere of trust and mutual rapport was established almost immediately. Although this is not necessarily a limitation, it must be acknowledged that it puts a slightly different emphasis on the results. A study conducted between a researcher and a group of totally unfamiliar group of students might achieve different results.

Conclusion

This Chapter has outlined:

How the subjects were selected.
The research procedure.
Establishing a Framework for Analysis
Developing a Focus for Analysis
Methods of Analysis Used
Limitations of the study.

The following Chapter will present and discuss the results that were collected from the study.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS - PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

This Chapter presents the results of the study, summarizes the findings, discusses the difficulties encountered and includes an overall summary.

As stated in Chapter III, there are four main aspects analysed:

1. Analysis of Quantity of writing
2. Analysis of Topics
3. Analysis of Topic-elaboration
4. Analysis of Students' Attitudes to Writing and to Dialogue Journal Writing.

Results for each section are presented in table form first, followed by a brief discussion of the results and comments on the difficulties encountered and the limitations of the analysis. All figures in the tables show the results for the different ability groups in the same order. Thus, Students 1-3 are from the below-average group; Students 4-6 are from the average group; Students 7-9 are from the above-average ability group.

1. Analysis of Quantity of Writing

The following table codes the approximate total of words per entry per student, as well as an average score. The question under discussion is: Do students write more as the number of entries increase?. Fifteen entries were analysed. Each student's longest entry is circled in red and the shortest entry is circled in blue.

Table 2

Number of Words for Each Student Entry

STUDENTS

ENTRY	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	120	280	142	71	84	80	228	178	132
2	116	118	134	104	207	108	273	330	148
3	171	126	144	56	202	108	273	330	148
4	253	46	82	68	132	96	212	286	31
5	316	63	87	27	177	82	97	212	90
6	121	39	67	79	103	150	186	200	66
7	322	310	71	32	286	219	102	232	86
8	121	140	74	32	226	141	168	213	150
9	76	165	72	32	358	140	120	220	190
10	162	100	70	39	151	65	180	210	77
11	84	39	73	89	300	240	540	220	92
12	58	100	252	32	60	62	-	240	54
13	55	93	168	84	85	55	-	220	60
14	71	92	130	32	134	112	112	227	135
15	153	56	73	-	84	360	74	226	102
AV.	56	119	112	57	191	123	196	231	103

The above results show enormous variation in word length amongst the students. There is no overall trend which emerges. Some students wrote their longest entry quite early in the study; others made their shortest entry at numbner twelve or thirteen. The average word length per entry shows that generalizations about the quantity of writing produced by below-average, average and above-average students cannot reliably be made. For example, Student Four's average word length is the lowest out of the nine, yet she is in the average group; Student One isin the below- average group, but had an average word length per entry which was greater than Kirsten from the above-average group. Yet, by contrast, quite as one would expect, the highest average word length per entry came from an above-average student (Eight)

As the results show enormous individual variation, the answer to the question under discussion must be -it depends on the individual student. There is no overall great increase in the amount students write. However, by comparing the first six entries with the last seven entries, one can see that seven out of the nine students have their longest entry after entry six, while five out of the nine students have their shortest entry before entry seven. Only a study conducted over a longer period with many more entries could substantiate this slight trend.

Problems

Analysis of students' writing by word count alone, is severely limited. The hypothesis behind the question is that as students become more familiar with the procedure and establish a relationship with the researcher, they will use the opportunities given to them by the journal to write longer entries. This does not correspond to practice, especially as the time they could write in was restricted. They wrote when they remembered, or when they could get enough time during class. For example, Student Six's longest entry of 540 words was made when there was no teacher for his class and he had a free period.

Analysis on the basis of word count alone, grossly over-simplifies the complicated nature of the students' writing and only gives a rough indication of quantity from which few reliable generalizations can be made. As Staton's study noted: "The difficulty with the word count was that a word count of the entire entry obscured the topic-specific nature of the writing and its interactiveness" (Staton,1982,Vol.II,p.10). More sophisticated methods of analysis had to be tried.

2. Analysis of Topics

The question under discussion is: What kinds of topics do students write about and to their topics change over the duration of the study? As the following tables show, there is enormous variation in the topics the students chose to write about and the number of times a topic was referred to. The following table sets out the topics for each category and the number of times the topic was referred to by all students for all entries.

TABLE 3

Number of Times Topics Referred to by All Students

(For All Entries)

Academic/School

Subjects	Pass	Fail	Activities	Classwork	Attitude
25	2	1	8	11	3

Interpersonal

Work/Car.	Sport	Peers	Writ.	Teach.	Moral/Soc.
24	33	14	43	8	3

Personal

Fam.	Home	Eval.	Hobb.	Self.	W/end	Likes/Dis.
13	23	7	12	24	27	11

From the figures, the topic most frequently referred to was, not unexpectedly, writing. This indicates perhaps the interest in writing dialogue journals created. Many references to writing were made in the first few entries and often were followed entry after entry, which indicates how students were trying to come to terms with this new mode of writing.

Other topics which occupied a significant amount of student time were (in order): Weekend Activities, Sport, School subjects, Self-reflection, Work/Career, Home Activities. It should be noted that these topics are drawn evenly from the three topic areas of Academic, Interpersonal, Personal. Topics which received least student attention were: Passing, Failing, Moral/Social issues, Attitude. Although outside the scope of this analysis, most topics could be said to be student-initiated. Even where a student wrote in response to a researcher-initiated topic, they were still electing to write on that topic, or else they ignored it and went on with what interested them. Sometimes students answered the researcher's questions briefly, then went on with their own topics.

The next Table shows the total topics in each of the three main analysis areas -Academic, Interpersonal, Personal - for all students across all entries.

TABLE 4

Distribution of Topics Into Areas (All students)

STUDENT	TOTAL	ACADEMIC	INTER PERSONAL	PERSONAL
Jane	RS 42	9	19	14
	%	21	45	33
David	RS 22	4	3	15
	%	18	14	68
Ernie	RS 35	7	23	5
	%	20	66	14
Peter	RS 43	7	23	13
	%	16	53	30
Richard	RS 34	4	16	14
	%	12	47	41
Chris	RS 19	2	11	6
	%	11	58	32
Carmen	RS 53	10	22	21
	%	19	42	40
Charles	RS 23	1	7	15
	%	4	30	65
Kirsten	RS 21	6	1	14
	%	28	5	67
OVERALL	292	50	125	117
	%	17	43	40

Looking at the topic areas for all students across all entries, an almost equal percentage of students' writing was spent in the Inter-Personal and Personal topic areas -43 and 40%, respectively. The least number topics occurred in the Academic area. Where individual students showed a higher percentage of total total topics in the Personal area, their percentage for the Inter-Personal area was lower. Similarly, where the Inter-Personal was highest, the Personal was lower. Only one student had a higher number of topics in the Academic area than the average (Kirsten), but at the same time, the number of topics in the Personal area were higher than average.

To try and establish whether students' topics changed over the duration of the study, each students' topics for the first five entries and the last five entries were compared using the three categories of analysis previously defined. The Table showing the results follows:

TABLE 5

Individual Variation in Topics in Areas for Entries 1-5 and 11-15

(All Students)

(In Raw Scores and Percentages)

NAME	TOPICS 1-5	ACAD.	INTER.	PERS.	TOPICS 11-15	ACAD.	INTER.	PERS.	
JANE	13	1	9	3	12	3	6	6	RS
		8	69	23		25	50	25	%
DAVID	8	3	1	4	7	0	0	7	RS
		27	13	50		0	0	100	%
ERNIE	9	0	8	1	16	5	10	1	RS
		0	89	11		31	63	27	%
PETER	14	2	7	5	15	2	9	4	RS
		14	50	36		13	60	27	%
RICHARD	11	3	8	0	11	1	4	6	RS
		27	73	0		9	36	56	%
CHRIS	8	0	4	4	6	0	4	2	RS
		0	50	50		0	67	33	%
CARMEN	19	0	12	7	24	8	6	10	RS
		0	63	37		33	25	41	%
CHARLES	11	1	6	4	7	0	1	6	RS
		10	55	36		0	14	86	%
KIRSTEN	6	3	0	3	7	0	1	6	RS
		50	0	50		0	14	85	%
OVERALL	99	13	55	31	105	19	41	45	RS
		13	56	31		18	39	43	%

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Comparing the overall percentage of topics for all students from the first five entries with the last five entries, the most important factor is a significant increase in the number of topics in the Personal area, from 31 % for all students, to 43%. This overall trend to the Personal sphere is mirrored by six students whose writing significantly moves to the Personal area in their last five entries. David has 100% of his final entries in the Personal area, compared with only 50% in his first five entries. Richard moves from a 0% in the Personal area in the first five entries, to 56% in the Personal area for his last five entries.

Overall, the last five entries of all students show a slight increase in the total number of topics mentioned, but it is not significant.

Problems

It was sometimes difficult for the researcher to decide under which topic a student's entry should be placed. There were no "objective" criteria the researcher could use. Similarly, the placing of the topics under each area could give different results. For example, had Work/Career been placed under Personal, rather than Inter-Personal, the overall results might have been different. In placing the topics under these areas, the researcher was guided by the Staton study and the types of topics the nine students wrote about.

3. Analysis of Topic Elaboration

The following table shows the percentage of elaborated toics out of all the topics each student wrote on over the fifteen entries in both Raw Scores and Percentages.

TABLE 6

Degree of Elaboration for All Students across All Entries

Student	Tot.Top.	Tot.Elab.Top.	Percentage
Ernie	36	19	52
Julie	43	26	60
David	22	14	63
Chris	20	15	75
Rich.	33	19	57
Pete	41	20	49
Charl.	24	20	83
Kirsten	21	15	71
Carmen	53	32	60
Total	293	180	61
Aver.	33	20	-

The first thing that stands out is that students' average elaboration result of 61% is quite high and is met by even students in the below-average group. Looking at the range of percentages from student to student, we see that there is significant variation as the range is from 49% to 83%. The range is also spread over the three ability levels, so that we find the lowest level of elaboration from a student in the average group, while some students from the below-average group meet the average. There is an indication that students who write about less topics than the overall total topic average of 33 topics, had a higher degree of elaboration than students who wrote on many more topics. (Julie is an exception here) Chris, for example, wrote on only twenty topics, but elaborated on fifteen of them (75%), while Carmen wrote on 53 topics but elaborated on only 32 of them (60%). This also applies to David who wrote on 22 topics, alaborated on 14 (63%), compared with Peter who wrote on 41 topics and elaborated on only 20 of them (49%). There do not seem to be significant differences between the sexes in the percentage of topics elaborated out of the total topics.

Turning now to a qualitative analysis of the total number of topics per student, Table 7 shows the breakdown of elaborated student topics into three degrees of elaboration: Details, Comparison, General Principle. Results are in raw scores and percentages.

TABLE 7

Qualitative Breadown of All Elaborated Topics into Areas (All Students across All Entries)

STUDENT	DETAILS		CLASSIFICATION COMPARISON		GENERAL PRINCIPLE	
	RS	%	RS	%	RS	%
Ernie	174	83	28	13	6	3
Jane	385	84	58	12	12	3
David	241	89	23	9	5	2
Chris	168	79	38	18	6	3
Richard	260	76	66	19	15	4
Peter	316	73	88	20	30	7
Charles	482	77	112	18	28	5
Kirsten	271	74	71	20	21	8
Carmen	365	73	109	22	25	5
Average	2262	74	613	20	148	5

From this qualitative analysis we can see that by far the greatest area of student elaboration is in the Details category, where students added specific details about the actions, actors, objects or locations of their topics. This meant that 74% of their elaboration was informational, i.e., descriptive. To give the reader some idea of the numbers of details involved, add to the students' total number of 180 elaborated topics, the total of 2,262 details!

By comparison, only 20% of all elaborated topics involved some explicit classification or comparison, while the lowest percentage of elaboration fell into the General Principle category. Again, there seems to be little differences between the sexes, however, when trying to make individual comparisons, the researcher noted significant differences between the qualitative elaboration of the below-average and above-average groups of students. The following Table sets the information out most clearly. The total scores in each category for the three students in each ability grop have been added together to make a raw score.

TABLE 8

Qualitative Discourse Elaboration Profile of Below-Average and Above-Average Students (All Topics, All Entries)

STUDENTS	TOPIC TOTAL	TOTAL ELAB.	AREAS		
			DETAILS	COMPARISON	PRINCIPLE
Below Average RS	101		800	109	23
%		58	85	12	2
Above Average RS	98		1118	282	74
%		68	76	19	5

Although the total number of topics written about is nearly equal, the above-average group averages an elaborate rate of 68%, compared with the bottom group who elaborate only 58% of the time. The top group includes less details (76%), compared with the below-average group (85%). The reverse is true of the General Principle category where the top group make general statements in 5% of elaborated topics and the bottom group, only 2%. More comparisons are made by the top group too -19% compared with 12%.

Although only tentative generaliztions can be made about the data from this small sample, the qualitative analysis of elborated topics does show differences in writing (if not in thinking) between the two ability groups. From the above data, it appears that in elaborating, the above-average students are focusing less on details and more on comparing/classifying and seeking to understand the genral meaning of a topic, compared with below-average studants who focus to a larger degree on just adding details. A more extended sample is necessary to estalish whether these individual students indicate a general pattern true for all students from these two ability groups.

This analysis has been useful in verifying what teachers look for in students' writing, namely, the degree and quality of elaboration. This could help to explain why the students who elaborate more and try to compare and establish the meaning of a given topic, are given an "A"-Grade, while students who elaborate less and mainly add details when they do, are given an "E-"Grade.

To see whether students elaborate more over the duration of the study, ech student's first five entries were compared with their last five entries and elaborated topics were then classified as previously outlined. The following Table shows results in both raw scores and percentages:

TABLE 9

Comparison of First Five and Last Five Entries Using Qualitative Analysis (All Students)

	Raw Scores			In Percentages			
STUDENT	ENTRIES	Topic TOTALS	Total ELAB.	ELAB.	DETAILS	COMP.	Gen. PRINCIPLE
ERNIE	1-5	9	5	55	73	18	8
	11-15	17	7	41	87	11	1
JANE	1-5	14	8	57	86	12	2
	11-15	12	6	50	80	12	6
DAVID	1-5	8	6	75	95	3	0
	11-15	8	4	50	87	11	1
CHRIS	1-5	8	5	63	86	12	3
	11-15	6	5	83	80	18	2
RICHARD	1-5	11	6	55	82	14	4
	11-15	11	7	64	79	17	13
PETER	1-5	15	3	20	67	24	9
	11-15	12	8	40	76	17	7
CHARLES	1-5	11	9	81	77	18	5
	11-15	7	5	71	75	19	6
KIRSTEN	1-5	6	4	67	76	17	5
	11-15	7	5	71	67	24	9
CARMEN	1-5	19	13	68	73	28	4
	11-15	24	13	54	73	21	5
AVERAGE	1-5	101	59	58	80	16	4
	11-15	104	60	57	77	18	5

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Comparing the overall averages in each category for the first five entries with the last five entries, we can see only slight changes. The number of topics and the average degree of elaboration overall, in fact decreases very slightly by one per cent from 58% to 57% in the last five entries. What is more significant, however, is the drop in percentage in the Details area, from 80% in the first five to 77% in the last five, and a relative increase in the final two areas. The percentage of elaboration in the Comparison area increases from 16% to 18% and in the General Principle area from 4% to 5%. Although these changes are only very slight and need to be substantiated by a wider study, they are perhaps an indication that dialogue journals could provide opportunities for elaboration of a deeper nature in students' writing, given a longer period in which students can gradually develop strategies for elaboration.

Individual changes are also noticeable, but are not confined to particular ability groups or sex. While only four students out of the nine elaborate more in later entries, six students decrease the amount of details they include, five increase the amount they classify, while six increase the amount they add general principles. If these individual changes over the duration of the study are taken into account with the overall student changes noted in Table 7, one can see the beginnings of change in the writing of these students, even after only one month of dialogue journal writing. These changes would seem to indicate a shift in the depth and intensity of students' writing from a basic level of describing events, to a maturer writing style where details are compared, classified and added to general framework. The latter is much valued in the writing of secondary students and as this study has found, it is more evident in the above-average students, and it could explain their high academic grades. Staton also noted this change in her study and raised this salient question:

> The question we would like to answer, of course, is whether the dialogue writing only reflects these differences, or whether the dialogue writing is also an interactive, facilitative process which helps change the students' performance.
>
> (Staton,1982,p.56)

3. Analysis of Students' Attitude to Writing and Dialogue Journal Writing

This section presents the results of "The Writing Interview", "The Attitude to Writing Inventory", the "Student Self-Evaluation of Dialogue-Journal Writing". To answer the question under analysis, several attitude measures were applied. As the broadest is "The Writing Interview", results from this will be the first discussed.

The Writing Interview

This was applied twice, before and after the journal writing in the hope that changes in attitude would be noted on the after Interview. Being an open-ended questionnaire, presenting the results posed a problem to the researcher, as students' comments cannot be categorized and must be presented intact. Consequently the following method of presenting the data was adopted: all students' comments are included verbatim where possible, or else abbreviated with care taken to preserve the meaning. The left hand column contains results from the before interview. The right-hand column contains results from the after interview. However, only additional information or comments at variance to the before interview are given. All comments which are the same in the after as in the before survey are acknowledged with the word "Same". Brackets with numbers in them indicate the numbers of students who agreed.

TABLE 10

Results of Before and After Writing Interview (All Students)

1. Difficulties with writing	
Read over what I've written(2)	Stop and think.
Think about something else	Change the subject matter.
Think about what I want to write(4)	Use alternative words.
Ask for teacher's help.(2)	Try to work it out myself.
Stop writing and come back	Same.

Do anything else?	
Change wording to avoid problems	Solve problem then and there.
Take a break. (3)	Same.
Ask someone else for help(2)	Same(2)
Take out pieces.	Daydream

2. When interrupted, I:	
Do nothing. Lose idea.	Same
Leave it and come back later(4)	Same(4)
Try to finish writing first(2)	Same
Doesn't make any difference(2)	Same

3. A good writer is:	Reason :	
J. Tolkein	Holds interest.	Same
Danielle Steel	Her style	"
Leon Uris	Interesting subjects	"
Arthur Haley	Interesting	"
School friend	Vocabulary	"
School friend	Style	'
Brother	Ideas, neatness	"
Wilbur Smith	Expresses well	"
Mother	Deep thought	"

4. Do they encounter difficulties?	
Yes -3	Yes =5
No -6	No -5
What would they do?	
Tackle it(2)	Same(3)
Take a break(5)	Same(3)
Seek advice(2)	Same(3)

5.How would you help?	
Say to read more books(2)	Same
Read over their work, offer advice	"
Give them new ideas	"
Not help them	Depends
Take to them	Same
Change topic	Same
Seek advice from English teacher	"

6. How would a teacher help?	
Use their knowledge of the subject	Same
Define problems	Suggest they sit down and concentrate on what they are doing.
Give special exercises (2)	Same(2)
Give different topics	Same

7. How did you learn to write?

Can't remember. I just wrote.	Same
Mother, teacher	Same
Taught howto sound out letters	Same
Reading interesting books	Same
Not sure, school, picking it up	Same

8. What I'd like to do better when writing:

Concentrate, enjoy it.	Vary my essays. Have a wider range of thought
Be able to think of different	Same
topics	Same
Be able to hold a topic for longer	
Nothing.	I am quite satisfied with my final drafts.
Improve everything	
Improve handwriting, grammar,	Punctuation
be able to spell better.	Meet deadlines

9. Are you a good writer? Why? Why not?

No.	Trouble with spelling, things to write.	Same
No.	No good ideas. Writing messy.	"
No.	Cannot construct my writing in the proper way.	"
No.	Know better writers than myself	"
No.	Takes a while for my thoughts to develop	"
Undecided	I really can't judge my own writing	Yes.
Undecided		"
No.	I do not enjoy writing. Can't Concentrate	"
Yes	Don't know. I have always read a lot	"

"The Writing Interview" did not pick up any change in students' attitude to writing over the course of the study. The majority of comments applied equally after the survey as it did before. Any changes occur only in the detail of the students' particular answers where they chose different ways of expressing themselves the second time. However, it does give a good indication of how students view the writing process, although their view of writing did not change over the course of the study. As the answers to Questions 8 and 9 indicate, these secondary students have a "product"-oriented view of writing. They value correctness of expression, legibility, being able to write on a topic. The very negative answers to Question 9, "Are you a good writer?" surprised the researcher, as six out of the nine students felt that they weren't good writers -even the average or above-average students. Two students were undecided and only ONE said "Yes". What is more disappointing is that none of these students changed their answers after the dialogue journal study. Students' reasons for not being a good writer reveal a concern with superficial, technical points, rather than with meaning. Only one student had a different answer to Q.9 in the after Interview. Peter moved from "Undecided,I prefer not to make this decision", to "Yes, because you give me good marks". The change was therefore not due to the dialogue journal writing experience, but due to external factors, rather than internal changes.

In general, the researcher found that "The Writing Interview" did not give a very clear picture of students' attitudes to writing. For example, do the negative answers to Q.9. reflect the students' modesty more than their abilities? The main advantage in using the Interview is that it allows the students to write answers in detail and at length. In fact, students rarely did this, writing short answers. Some even resented the questions:

> Why do you ask the same questions in
> some cases?
> How the bloody hell would I know. What
> a stupid question. (Answer to Q4)

The only benefit was that it gave the researcher an insight into the students' overall concept of writing.

Attitude to Writing Inventory

The following table indicates students' responses to each statement about writing included in the inventory. The total number of students are entered in the appropriate column. The left-hand column indicates the before survey and the right-hand column indicates the after survey.

TABLE 11

Student Response to Attitude to Writing Inventory

STATEMENT NO.	S.AGREE		AGREE		UNDECIDED		DISAGREE		S.DISAGREE	
	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A
1.			4	6	3	2	1		1	1
2.				5	6	3	2		1	
3.	2	1	4	4	1	3	2	1		
4.	1	1	7	6					1	1
5.			1		1	2	5	6	2	1
6.	2			3	1	2	3	3	3	1
7.			5	3	1	3	3	3		
8.		2	5	3	3	3		1	1	
9.	1	1	5	5	2	3			1	
10.	2	1	5	3	2	4		1		
11.			3	4	4	3	1	2	1	
12.			2	2	1	3	4	3	2	1
13.			3	3	5	5		1	1	
14.			2	1	4	4	1	4	1	
15.		1	3	4	1	1	3	3	2	
16.	4	2	3	6	1	1			1	
17.	1		5	5	1	3	1	1	1	
18.			2	1	2	5	3	3	2	
19.		1	4	1		3	5	4		
20.	1	1	2			1	5	4	2	2

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The first thing that stands out is that student entries for every statement have changed in the after survey compared with the before one. In fact, so many and varied are the responses that the researcher was faced with the problem of how to evaluate and discuss them. Many changes are so slight as to be insignificant, e.g., a move from Strongly Disagree to Disagree. In what follows, a general summary of students' responses is given. The numbers given in brackets give the numbers of students in each case.

Most students began with a positive attitude towards writing, except one who strongly disagreed. While his opinion was the same at the end of the study, more students said they enjoyed writing at the end of the study (6-4). Students' answers to statements 2 and 3 were contradictory, however, most said they preferred to write on their own and disliked writing in the company of others. This attitude did not change by the end of the study. More students were happy to let others read their writing by the end of the study (4 Disagreed), compared with the start (6 Disagreed). Most found writing easy at the start of the study (5 Agreed), but by the end, opinion was evenly divided. All students said both before and after the study that they would like to write more if they were better at it.

Answers to Questions 10 and 12 showed conflicting opinions. Most students did not feel school was a good place to write and this was the same in the after survey. Somewhat surprisingly, most did feel that the writing they did at school was relevant to their needs -this remained the same. Both times students were undecided as to whether they wanted more time to write in school. By the end of the study, more students said they would rather write a letter than phone someone, compared with the start (5-4). Little difference was noted in answers to Questions 16 and 17. Most students agreed both before and after.

The answers to Question 18 -my first draft is my final draft- changed somewhat. Before the study, most disagreed (5), but by the end, 5 were undecided. At the start, opinion to Question 19 was almost evenly divided: 4 Agreed; 5 Disagreed. By the end, opinion was changing: 3 were Undecided; 4 Agreed. Significant changes were noted in the answer to the last statement. The one who strongly disagreed remained the same, but five as opposed to four disagreed, one was undecided and none agreed (before 2 Agreed). The two who strongly disagreed remained the same.

These results show that student attitudes were beginning to change, albeit slightly. The "Attitude Inventory" was responsive to these changes. However, there were no major changes which stand out. Changes were slight, and rarely moved right across the spectrum from

Disagree to Agree, for example. The column that received the most changes was the "Undecided" one, where there were 13 more responses in the after, compared with the before survey. The others only had 6 more each in the after survey. This would seem to indicate that students were in the process of changing their attitudes and were not fully settled.

Slight changes were that some students were more positive to writing, some enjoyed writing more and they were more receptive to letting others read their work. These changes are very minor, but considering they occur after only one months' journal writing, they are quite remarkable. Only a longer study could verify these trends. That some results are contradictory shows weaknesses in the "Attitude Inventory" and the need for more carefully balanced statements and possibly a clearer scoring system. However, the survey was worthwhile, because it was responsive to the slightest changes which went undetected in the "Writing Interview".

Student Self-Evaluation of Dialogue Journal Writing

This was designed to give students the chance to present their attitudes to dialogue journal, specifically. Results are not presented in a Table form, but are discussed in commentary form below, with students' quotes where appropriate. Students wrote from a minimum of one paragraph to two or more pages every day. When this was averaged out, it came to approximately 140 words per entry per student, although with this figure must also be kept in mind the highest entry of 540 words and the lowest of 27. Overall, the amount varied as one student wrote: "Whatever amount was sufficient to cover the events of the day". Although the researcher stipulated a one paragraph minimum at the start of the study, this was not insisted on, as it was not needed. Students were easily able to fulfil this requirement, but not consistently.

Most students wrote during class time, free periods or while waiting for teachers to come to class. In some instances this was an indictment of the education they were receiving. One wrote: "during class when I became bored with the classwork", and another, "during the classes in which the teacher was talking about nothing which happened quite regularly".

The time students took to write their entries varied enormously, from 5-10 minutes to "about an hour at each time". That they wrote to fulfil their own needs and were not writing to meet set needs, is shown by this comment:- "(it took) a while to think of something to write, then I just kept on writing till I didn't want to write any more."

The self-selection of topics was hard for students at times because they were unused to this lack of direction. Many early entries were about writing in the journals and students expressed worries about what they would write, but almost after the first entry, they relaxed, as this comment shows:

> This type or writing was very difficult to do at the start but since then I think I might revise my opinions as writing this time has ecome easier, probably because of the questions that you have asked.

Other students' comments reflect this too. Students wrote about "whatever sprung to mind", answered researchers questions and focused on "topics I wanted to write about". The "safety-valve" nature of journal writing mentioned in Chapter II, is aptly illustrated by this comment on topic choice: "Things that bothered me and things going on". In an informal chat with the researcher at the end of the study, this same student said that she could take her frustrations out on her journal, and instead of getting upset at her teacher, she pulled out her journal. In reviewing the topics they chose, only one student mentioned a specific theme- "Computer, and Computers and Computers...."

An interesting observation the researcher noted was the format of the journals. Most students just wrote, but two students relied on a familiar format on occasions: letter writing. They seemed to call on this structure when they were unsure. One student chose the letter format for her first entry which reads: "Dear Ms. T., How are you? I really have no idea what to write to you, so I'll just tell you what's been happening lately". This format was continued for five entries, then dropped. Each time the researcher responded in the same letter format chosen by the student. In the meantime, a second student developed the letter format after the second entry, kept it up for one more, dropped it till entry seven and thereafter. It seemed to have been used by the this student as a way of putting a formal gap between his entry and the researcher:

> Dear Ms.T, I am feeling rather awful at the moment".(S3)
>
> Dear Ms.T., I'm feeling better today."(S4)
>
> Dear Ms.T., I don't see what me being lazy has to do with me not controlling myself"(S7)

Therefter, the letter format was abandoned, perhaps indicating that the security of the letter format was no longer needed.

Topics which students said they were most involved in were those connected with school, careers and the ones which least involved them were "short ones where I could not really think of something to write".

Rather surprisingly, students were not hamstrung about notions of privacy about their journals. All students said they would let someone else read their journals and frequently let their friends read them. This seemed to be a healthy attitude and whether this was possible because of the "dialogue" aspect of the journals where from the outset, they know someone was going to read them, or because they did not get down to any really personal details, is difficult to say. The researcher is inclined towards the former because students did entrust her with confidences about themselves, other teachers etc., and were quite direct in their responses. These comments did occur more after the dialogue journals had been established, but were also evident quite early on.

The students' overall assment of their dialogue journal writing was favourable. Most students (seven out of nine) found the experience valuable and enjoyed it. They found it valuable because:

> It has made it easier for me to begin writing.

> It helped me to just (sic) my own feelings for the moment on paper. I learnt a it more about my English teacher. I enjoyed reading your reply every day.

Only two students found the writing of low value and all but the same two said they would like to continue their journal writing. All the others became involved in it and felt their journal was worth preserving: "It would be interesting to look at in 10 years".

The greatest benefit in writing the journal varied for each student. The following quotes indicate the range of answers:

> Getting my frustrations out.
>
> Not being forced to write a specific amount.
>
> Trying to improve my writing.
>
> It has a made it easier to write.
>
> Letting a teacher know my views on certain matters.
>
> It has made it easier for me to begin to write more expressively.
>
> More understanding of the teacher.

Five students felt that the journals did contribute to their writing for reasons mentioned above and because it enabled students to pick their own topics and define their opinions: "It made it easier to think of topics"; "It has helped me to be able to put my opinions down on paper."

In short, eight of the nine students found the whole exercise enjoyable. The ninth, who resented it, was an A-Grade student with a well-developed, fluent writing style, but even his attitude changed somewhat by the end of the study:

> At the start I resented it. I was even going to refuse to do it, but Mum convinced me to write. It got a little more enjoyable toward the finish.

In informal discussions with the students at the end of the study, most students felt that they were just getting started. A great strength students found was that they didn't have to write to a set length and the fact that they chose to participate in the exercise. Most stated that they wouldn't have liked it if they'd been told they were to keep a dialogue journal as part of their English course for the year.

The "Self-Evaluation" was most valuable for giving an overall picture of how students felt about their writing and in particular, what they felt about the whole experience.

General Summary

The aim of the study was to document and describe the dialogue journal writing of nine secondary students. The results of the four areas investiaged are summarized under headings below.

1. Quantity of Writing

This varied considerably from student to student. No general claim can be made that students wrote more towards the end of the study, although seven of the nine students had their longest entry after entry six. Individual variations were too great. No generalizations about the quantity of writing produced by students from differing ability groups could be made. Analysis by word count alone proved to be too gross a measure of the students' writing to be useful.

2. Topics

There were many topics students wrote on. The most favoured ones were those which directly concerned the student in his/her everyday life. Students' writing was largely focused in the one area -Interpersonal. Least writing time was spent on Academic topics. A comparison of first five with last five entries showed an increase in the percentage of topics occurring in the Personal area. Individual changes were marked and sometimes as great as 100%.

3. Topic Elaboration

The overall elaboration percentage of topics which were elaborated was high.(61%) The range of elaboration was also great. There was an indication that students who wrote on less topics had a higher degree of elaboration than those who wrote on more topics. A qualitative analysis found that most elaborated topics consisted of additional details about people, actions, objects. Fewer elaborated comments made comparisons and even less formed generalizations. A comparative analysis of ability groups showed that above-average students elaborated more than below-average students. The former also added fewer details, but compared more and generalized more than the latter. These results show differences in the nature of the writing of these two groups of students. Comparison of the last five with the first five entries of all students showed no great increase in the number of topics elaborated, but a qualitative analysis shows a decrease in the number of details elaborated, with an increase in the number of comparisons and generalizations made, indicating that their writing was perhaps becoming more complex and students were seeking to make relatioships more explicit.

3. Attitude

Students' attitude to writing did not change significantly over the course of the study. Evidence suggests that their ideas were in the process of changing, but the study was too short be accurate about the direction of these changes. From the "Self-Evaluation", it is clear that students thought the dialogue journal writing was worthwhile and valuable. Most wanted to continue with them and nearly all enjoyed writing in them.

Conclusion

This concludes the presentation and discussion of results. The final Chapter is the Conclusion to the study.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to document and describe the dialogue journal writing of nine secondary students. This Chapter presents information on:

Summary and Discussion of Findings
Classroom Implications
Directions for Further Research
A Concluding Statement

1. Summary and Discussion of Findings

The overall purpose of the study was to try to understand the nature of dialogue journal writing and to assess whether it is a mode of writing suitable for secondary students. One of the problems outlined in Chapter I, was that as students move up the educational ladder, their opportunities for writing, particularly expressive writing, diminish. This is coupled with an increasing reliance on writing as an examination mode, particularly in formal essays and a movement away from writing which allowed students scope to explore issues relevant to them and which would contribute to their personal growth. It was hypothesized at the start of the study, that if students could find a mode of writing which allowed this and gave them opportunities for continuous writing, they would write more and their writing would be of a more expressive nature.

This study found that students did not write significantly more over the duration of the study, although there is an indication that they were developing that tendency. The average length of 140 words per entry (many wrote more) compares favourably with the studies quoted in Chapter I. Not only is the dialogue journal writing continuous writing on a daily basis, but it is expressive, student-centred writing, as the anaysis of topics showed.

As with the Staton study, this study did not find any generalized, or group effects of dialogue journal writing amongst this group of students. Dialogue journal writing does not greatly alter students' writing to any statistically significant degree. Small changes were discernible, particularly among a sub-group of students, such as the shift to writing to more personal topics. Many of the specific questions asked by this study did not find any significant changes were made in the students' writing over the duration of the study. This may have partly been due to the short duration of the study -one month only- but perhaps also due to the nature of the dialogue journals themselves.

The key to understanding the dialogue journals and their significance, is not to isolate factors such as writing, learning, thinking, or to separate process from product. The highly interactive nature of the journals means that they must be viewed holistically. When analysing the data, the researcher discovered how difficult it was to separate and define "chunks" of data from what was basically a continuous "flow" of conversation. Even thinking and writing were at times inseparable as one student found in his first entry:

> At the moment I am thinking that I will have trouble finding something to write in this journal every day. for four

> weeks. Right now I am trying to think of something else to right in this first days journal. I only wrote that last sentence so I could make up my first paragraph.

Although it seems that the student is writing to fill the requirements set and that the journal entry is in danger of glorifying "garbage" which critics of journals point to, this does not occur. Students very quickly move on to an area of immediate concern to them. The same student's entry continues:

> I am also worried about having to get up in front of the whole school at essembly tomorrow morning to give a speech for red house.

Once the "start" had been made, students kept up a very high standard in their writing which was not ego-centric, nor trivial.

As evidenced by the first entry, students' writing became inseparable from their own growing and personal development. Through writing about topics that interested them and at their own pace, they were able to explore some of the areas vital to their own development such as their relationship to teachers, their future careers, their attitude to school. In this way the dialogue journals were ale to assist the students with the developmental tasks essential for them to complete during adolesence. By contributing to their personal growth, the dialogue journals contributed, ultimately, to their overall educational development.

Returning to the contribution the dialogue journals made to the students' writing, because this study did not discover any conclusive or discernable patterns, this does not mean to say that the dialogue journals did not contribute to the students' overall development in writing. The first major thing it offers is the increased opportunity for writing time. Students could take as much or as little time as they wanted to practise their writing. Secondly, because they were always writing to someone, it made the students very aware of an "audience" when writing. This contrasts sharply to the writing for teacher-as-examiner, most students in Senior high school do. Students are forced to make their writing clear and communicative.

Writing to a teacher meant that students had a supportive model and a "sympathetic listener" who was able to give the students positive feedback, so vital to making a student's educational experience a positive one. Each student received a personal communication and this helped break down the sense of alienation many of these students had towards school and teachers generally. Although it is impossible to measure, dialogue journals offer many opportunities for enhancing a student's self-concept just through providing positive feedback. Many entries discussed what was happening to them at school, how they "got on" with other teachers and school was a topic, most students said they were involved in. Writing in the dialogue journals helped the students realize their teachers were "human" too. As one student put it: "It sure is good to let someone else on the 'other side', namely a teacher, know about my feelings about school etc." This comment also indicates that students had a need to communicate to teachers and the dialogue journals were able to provide the avenue.

From a teacher's point of view, the researcher also found that the journals were interesting and enjoyable to read. As the journal writing progressed, the researcher became more of a co-writer. Writing with a teacher meant that the gap between everyday language and the language of instruction, used often by teachers, could be bridged in very real ways. In another way, because the teacher is receiving entries every day, the opportunities for him/her to receive feedback about lessons etc. are also great. Even though this researcher knew the students very well, having taught them for two years for English, writing the dialogue journals allowed the researcher to get to know the students even better than before and that knowledge is extremely up-to-date and individual and puts one in touch with one's students in a way that is not possible within a normal English period, because of the demands of the "lesson". Writing the dialogue journal meant that the teacher had many more opportunities for addressing students as individuals.

2. Classroom Implications

A question asked earlier was: "To what extent must dialogue journals be 'at the heart of our writing classroom"? This is difficult to answer, because the results depend on the interacation between teacher and student, and as this researcher found, the dialogue journals are as different as each students' handwriting. Dialogue journal writing requires a certain degree of trust and respect on both sides to work effectively. It could not be used to "save" a weakening relationship between teacher and class.

Dialogue journals could also not be used as a technique for teaching writing, so in this sense, they could not be "at the heart of our writing classroom". However, they do contribute to the students' development in writing and can play an important part in the process of learning and enjoying writing and in breaking down any fear of writing which writing for examinations may have created. Students engaged in this study enjoyed and looked forward to writing in the journals. For the majority of students, the experience was a positive one. Most of them were whole-heartedly involved (as was the researcher) and it was evident that the journals "meant" something to the students. As time went on, the students became accustomed to carrying them around with them everywhere, taking them out to write in them at odd moments, reading entries with friends. The covers of the journals became progressively more "personalised", as students "decorated" them with drawings/writing.

The students were extremely interested in understanding the nature of the dialogue writing themselves and writing was the most popular topic. As one student said: "This type of writing is new to me as I have not even kept a diary", and he continued to attempt a definition of dialogue journal writing:

> This type of writing is more like a conversation, rather than letter writing, as it is like talking, there is no formal writing, except maybe the date, that makes it seem like a letter. It is rather like writing a continuous essay, with a break in between the pages, with someone firing questions left right and centre about what you have written....it is rather like a casual conversation.

If students can see the oral basis of writing, this could lead to a reduction in the number of "blocks" students encounter when writing. Certainly many students in this study found they could begin writing more easily, after their dialogue journal experience. It is here that dialogue journals make their greatest contribution to the secondary situation. They could form a middle ground between the process-oriented, mult-draft writing which is now occurring in primary schools, and the product-oriented, first-draft as final draft writing required by examinations in the Senior high school. Staton recommends the dialogue journals to be used as a developmental step for beginning writers before they try a more complex form, where the journals "emerge as a missing, developmental link between oral and written language".(Staton,1982,p67) In the secondary school, dialogue journals offer writers the opportunity to return to a less formal, less complex way of writing which gives them the chance to develop their opinions, explore topics, develop their interests. This is useful in aiding their own personal development and would benefit their writing in more formal situations, which require opinions that are definite and precise. Many students in this study said writing in the journals made it easier for them to think of topics, get their feelings down on paper. This is not to suggest that the dialogue journals do not have a value in their own right, but it would appear that they could offer a bridge between the process-oriented writing now occurring in primary schools and product-oriented writing of secondary schools.

However, using dialogue journals in the secondary context does have some disadvantages. It is difficult for students to find the time to write in the journals. Taking the time out of other teacher's classes is clearly unsuitable. Setting aside a "block" of time within the English period might be possible. The researcher was not able to do this because this study involved only nine students out of a total of 25. Another disadvantage is the time demands on the teacher who must write back individual return entries every night. The time taken by this researcher averaged from one to half an hour for nine students. Clearly one could not take on dialogue journal writing with 25 secondary students and still have the entries meaningful and relevant.

Dialogue journals would thus seem to be ideally suited to a small class of up to fifteen students, however, the innovative classroom teacher would be able to find ways around these problems. Perhaps conduct dialogue journals with half the class at a time, or perhaps write a return entry every second night?

3. Suggestions for Further Research

There are many areas this study did not investigate because to do so was beyond the scope of this small study. Each of the four areas specifically analysed could br replicated but with more students and more entries as the data base, say a study of one semester's duration, one year the maximum.

The area of topic continuation would be worthwhile pursuing, as this study did not examine the extent to which students continued their topics across entries. Another area not at all analysed was the researcher's writing. This was because the focus of the study was the students' writing, but the same analysis applied to the students' writing could be applied to the researcher's writing and the two could then be compared.

One area was suggested to the researcher after watching students with their journals -the relationship between reading and writing. The first thing students do when they receive their journal is read their own and the researcher's entry, perhaps several of their friends' as well. A question to investigate would be: To what extent does writing in the dialogue journals contribute to a students's reading development?

The role of teacher as counsellor needs to be investigated and whether different approaches by the teacher have any effect on the student's writing. For example, does it make any difference if the teacher does not ask any return questions, but just comments on the student's entry?

Finally, different approaches to dialogue journal writing could be compared. What happens if the students have the journals at home at night and the teacher writes a return entry during the day? What happens if the teacher writes a return entry only every second day, or once a week? What happens if students write dialogue journals to each other?

As can be seen from the above, there are many possible avenues for research. This area of writing research has only just begun. The discourse analysis methods developed by Staton's study and used in this study are revealing and worthwhile. However, since the Staton study was completed in 1982, Jana Staton has expressed concern about increased research into dialogue journals it has generated. Her comments from a recent Newsletter are included at length:

> I am becoming very aware of the limits of research for explaining much less predicting what happens when two persons who were strangers become friends through a dialogue. All the descriptions of the structure of discourse and explanations of self-disclosure or causal reasoning won't begin to describe or explain the experience of wonder, every time I know I've been understood by another human being, every time I enlarge my understanding of the immensity of another's mind and spirit, so carefully hidden from me by a socially appropriate "face". Perhaps this wonder is greater because the dialogues work best across those visible human differences we believe are so real and meaningful -age, sex, culture or language.

A Concluding Statement

Dialogue journals would appear to have definite value in the secondary classroom. They offer a unique opportunity for student-centred learning consistent with recent Victorian Education Departmental Policy changes, themselves consistent with naturalistic theories of learning and language learning.

In the area of writing, dialogue journals provide an avenue for authentic discourse which draws on a student's "intuitive learning and thinking resources" (Arnold,1982,p.38). They provide opportunities for students to "write their way to understanding" (Carr,1978,p48) and a context which allows them to explore their needs as adolescents and because they are committing themselves to paper, thce process of shaping their experience is sharper than it would be if restricted to talk (Britton,1970,p.248). They can provide opportunities for personal growth so vital to secondary students to realize before they leave school, given the rapidly changing world in which they live. They cannot be said to be method for teaching writing, but because the students are writing within the supportive framework of a teacher who acts as a model and counsellor, students can begin to take more risks with their writing.

Finally, their use allows an educator to develop an education which is "individualized at the personal level, rather than at the skill level" and which contributes towards:

> putting our extensive knowledge about learning back into a holistic framework, as a natural human experience which all humans are innately programmed to do well.
>
> (Staton,1982,p.148)

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APPENDIX 1.

LETTER TO PARENTS

Dear

I am asking for your assistance in helping me fulfil a requirement for a Post Graduate Diploma in Reading/Language, which I am currently completing at Riverina College, Wagga.

As the final stage I must submit an Independent Study to the College and I hope to base my research for this study on the written work of your son/daughter. This work will be in the form of a Journal in which both your son/daughter and I will be writing daily for four weeks. The work will then be taken up and analysed. The writing will not be part of the normal English class work and the research will not jeopardize your child's study in any way. (I am hoping that the exact reverse will occur.)

As examples and references to the student's writing will be made, I intend to use pseudonyms throughout the thesis. Apart from the College examiners, the work will be strictly confidential.

I look forward to your approval and to working with your child in this project. Should you wish to discuss the matter in more detail with me, please phone the school on

Please sign the form below and return it to me as soon as possible.

Yours faithfully,

THE WRITING INTERVIEW

Name:_____________________ Age:______________ Date:______________________

Occupation:___________________ Educational Level:_______________________

Sex:________ Interview Setting________________ Interviewer:_____________

1. When you are writing and you encounter difficulty, what do you do?

   Do you ever do anything else?

2. When your writing is interrputed, what do you do?

3. Who is a good writer that you know?

   What makes him/her a good writer?

4. Do you think that s/he encounters difficulty when s/he is writing?
   IF YES: When s/he encounters difficulty when writing, what do you think s/he does about it?

   IF NO: If s/he ever did encounter difficulty when writing, what do you think s/he would do about it?

THE WRITING INTERVIEW, Page 2..................Name: ____________

5. If you knew that someone was having difficulty writing how would you help them?

6. What would a teacher do to help that person?

7. How did you learn how to write?

ALTERNATE: Who helped you learn how to write?
How did they help you?

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THE WRITING INTERVIEW, Page 3..................Name: ____________

8. What would you like to do better when you are writing?

9. Do you think that you are a good writer?

IF YES: Why do you think so?
IF NO: Why do you think you are not a good writer?

Additional Comments:

Atwell, Margaret. THE WRITING INTERVIEW. Reading Program, Indiana University, 1977. (This version with revision by Harste and Burke.)

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APPENDIX 3.

ATTITUDE TO WRITING INVENTORY

NAME: ______________________________ SCHOOL: __________________________

FORM: _______________

AGE: _______________

SEX: _______________

This is NOT a test.

There is NO RIGHT or WRONG answers.

It is simply to see what you really think about writing. Your answers will be kept confidential.

Put a circle around the answer that most accurately describes your opinions.

1. I enjoy writing.

   Strongly Agree Agree Undecided Disagree Strongly Disagree

2. I write because I want to write for myself.

   Strongly Agree Agree Undecided Disagree Strongly Disagree

3. I write because I have to write for others.

   Strongly Agree Agree Undecided Disagree Strongly Disagree

4. I like to write on my own.

   Strongly Agree Agree Undecided Disagree Strongly Disagree

5. I like to write in the company of others.

   Strongly Agree Agree Undecided Disagree Strongly Disagree

6. I like others to read my writing.

   Strongly Agree Agree Undecided Disagree Strongly Disagree

7. I find writing easy.

   Strongly Agree Agree Undecided Disagree Strongly Disagree

8. I find writing interesting and worthwhile.

   Strongly Agree Agree Undecided Disagree Strongly Disagree

9. I would like to write more if I was better at it.

Strongly Agree Agree Undecided Disagree Strongly Disagree

10. I like to choose what I write about.

Strongly Agree Agree Undecided Disagree Strongly Disagree

11. I prefer to write to a set topic.

Strongly Agree Agree Undecided Disagree Strongly Disagree

12. School is a good place to write.

Strongly Agree Agree Undecided Disagree Strongly Disagree

13. The writing we do at school is relevant to my needs.

Strongly Agree Agree Undecided Disagree Strongly Disagree

14. I would like to have more time to write at school.

Strongly Agree Agree Undecided Disagree Strongly Disagree

15. I would rather write a letter than phone somebody long distance.

Strongly Agree Agree Undecided Disagree Strongly Disagree

16. Good writing is saying what you want to say, the way you want to say it.

Strongly Agree Agree Undecided Disagree Strongly Disagree

17. Good writing means correct spelling, punctuation, grammar and organization.

Strongly Agree Agree Undecided Disagree Strongly Disagree

18. When I write my first draft, it is usually my final draft.

Strongly Agree Agree Undecided Disagree Strongly Disagree

19. Learning how to write well is too difficult for most people.

Strongly Agree Agree Undecided Disagree Strongly Disagree

20. I wouldn't miss it, if I never wrote again.

Strongly Agree Agree Undecided Disagree Strongly Disagree

APPENDIX 4.

STUDENT SELF-EVALUATION OF ~~DIALOGUE~~ JOURNAL WRITING

1. How much did you write?

2. When did you find the time to write?

3. How long did you spend?

4. What sort of topics did you choose?

5. Which topics were you most involved in?

6. Which topics were you least involved in?

7. Which entries are the most interesting to re-read?

8. Could you show any entries to someone else? Who?

9. How valuable has the journal been to you?

10. Would you say you became involved in it?

____

____

11. Would you like to continue your journal writing?

____

____

12. Is your journal worth preserving?

____

____

13. What has been the greatest benefit in writing the journal for you?

____

____

14. Would you say that the journals contributed to your writing?

____

____

15. In what ways? If not, why not?

____

____

16. Was writing in the journals an enjoyable experience?

____

____

APPENDIX 5: TOPIC CHART WITH A SAMPLE ENTRY

PETER	School Subjects	Pass	Fail	School Activities o/s class	Class-work	Attitude	Work/Career	Sport	Peers	Writing Journals	Teachers	Moral-Social Issues	Family	Home Activities	Evaluat. of Day	Hobbies	Self Reflect.	Week-end Activities	Likes/Dislikes
1										X							X		
2	X									X		X							
3	X																X		X
4									X			X					X²		
5							X	X											
6							X	X									X		
7								X						X			X		
8	X								X										
9	X					X			X		X						X		
10											X								
11						X					X								
12										X									
13							X			X							X		
14							X											X	
15		X					X			X								X²	
TOTAL	4	1				2	5	3	3	5	3	2		1			8	3	1

JANE ENTRY NO.	TOPIC INTRO.	Personal Opinion	Actions	Actors	Objects	Comp./ Contrast	Classif-ication	General Principle
1 S1T1	X		X		X			
S2			X		X			
S3			X		X	X		
S4			X		X	X		
S5		X	X		X			
S6			X	X				
S7			X		X			
S8						X		X
2 S1T1	X	X	X		X	X		
S2		X	X		X			
S3 T2	X		X		X			
S4			X		X			
S5			X	X	X			
S6			X	X	X			
S7			X		X			
3 S1T1	X		X		X			
S2			X		X			
S3		X	X		X			
S4			X	X	X			
S5			X	X	X		X	
S6			X	X				
S7 T2	X							
S8 T3	X							
4 S1T1	X	X	X		X			
S2		X			X	X	X	X
S3 T2	X		X		X	X		
S4 T3	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
S5			X	X	X			
S6			X	X	X			
S7			X	X	X			
S8			X	X	X			
S9			X	X	X			
S10		X	X	X	X			
S11			X	X	X			
S12			X	X	X			
S13		X	X	X	X	X	X	
S14			X	X	X	X		
S15			X	X	X			
S16			X	X	X			X
S17		X					X	
S18 T4	X							
S19								
5 S1T1	X	X	X	X	X		X	
S2		X	X	X		X		
S3			X	X	X			
S4			X	X	X	X		
S5			X	X	X			
S6			X	X	X			
S7			X	X	X	X		
S8			X	X	X	X		

APPENDIX 7

SAMPLES OF STUDENTS' DIALOGUE JOURNAL WRITING

These are arranged in order of the three ability groups which took part in the study.

STUDENT 1: Below-Average

You won't have to write at lunchtime any more, so that'll be better. What do you usually do at lunchtime?
You managed to write quite a bit, even though you didn't like it!

^1 I was not feeling too good when I was writing my last piece of work. I could not think of much to say so I raved on about nothing.
^2 On the weekend I went to a 21st birthday party. I had a great time and I got drunk or pretty close to it. It was a very nice party and ~~the~~ my cousin received many nice gifts. Her cake was beautiful. it was pink with beautiful decorations.-

So I didn't write much but the Maths period I had a test and I was unable to write much. 52

I'm glad you were able to write something 12 and to tell me about your good party. I went to an interesting one myself on the weekend. People are starting to get out more now that the rain's stopped. Do you go out very much?

If you are away again, collect the book earlier and either write in the English period or when you have a small break in the day - such as

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waiting for a teacher before class. It's hard to find the time, but I'm sure if you look around, you'll find plenty of spare minutes. Were you sick the day you were away? If so, I hope you're better now. Was the maths test hard? How do you think you'll go?

Today I will talk about the job I will get or I am getting when I turn 17. Next year I am going up to Queensland and I am going to join the Police Force. I have wanted to join the Force since the age of 13, and my dream has nearly come true. I know a person who is a Senor Sergent and he tells me alot of things I should know when I join. Mr Boulds of the police is very nice to me when I ask him questions on what I should know. Dad said if I could not get in the Police Force you could also try for some of the other Forces, such as army or navy.

"Sorry about yesterday's work I didn't have enough time." No I don't think I will pass.

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I think you have chosen a very worthwhile profession and I'm sure you would be very good at it. Is there any special reason why you are going to go to Queensland to train, apart from the fact that the weather is nicer there?
If you couldn't get in, (what do you have to have any way?) which would you prefer - army or navy? Just think, you could be Sergeant Suphert one day! Are you finding it hard to get the time to make your journal entry during the day?

11 Yes I find it hard to write something in the diary everyday. I can never write anything of interest. I never do much at home or I never go out on the weekends. The only time I go out, on the weekends, is to the football.

12 This season with the netball and football has been an interesting one. Two football teams got into the grandfinal and the other two teams had no luck. The seconds and thirds both had strong teams. The thirds consisted of the Army Apprentices Latchford Barracks. The seconds mainly consist of people from Wodonga. They both played in the Grandfinal and won. It was touch and go in the both cases. The thirds

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won by five points and the seconds won by three points. The both teams were very excided. At the party for there wins I think about 5 people (players) didn't get drunk. Half or most of the army players had to be carried to the bus. Alot of them would have woken up with big headaches.

I hope I am not boring you with this raving on. It was something which I thought was exciting

Getting back to the question you asked me about Queensland, well the reason I am going up there is becouse they take people at the age of 16-17 to join the police force I was talking with dad last night and told me if I went he would be very lonely. so Iam not going now
54

Congratulations on such a long journal entry! T4
You have plenty to write about once you get going. Just because you don't go out, doesn't mean you can't write anything of interest.

Do you play or watch netball? I can just imagine how excited the teams were at that grand final. Please don't worry about boring me – I enjoy reading everyone's

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STUDENT 2: Average

51

7' 8'

At the moment I am finding it hard to write, mainly I think because the subject last period, art, has put me in a phisically creative mood instead of a mentally creative mood wich I believe I need to write something of meanning. On looking over what I have just written I find that it is meaningful and this disproves my theory, perhaps it is not the only theory I have that is wrong.

7'

Your writing is always meaningful and constructive. I think you will find the writing easier as we go along. I'm really interested to see how we go and I'll be looking forward to reading everyone's entries each night. It's a pity I couldn't use the whole class, though, as it probably makes you feel a little different and it might mean it'll be harder to find time to write the journal entry.

I was interested in what you said about art, though. What do you mean when you say it put you in a 'physically creative' mood? Isn't writing physical too? Which do you prefer? I thought some of the oil work you were doing (in art) looked promising. Are you going to continue with art?

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T1 S1 With regards to the moods of different subjects, I think that English is slightly physical in the actions required to write but you have to constantly concentrate otherwise you lose your 'train of thought'.

S2 Art, which I regard as physically creative, is also mentally active in the area of 'modern art'. S3 'Modern Art' requires deep though as to what you are trying to achieve with the use of simple lines and color area's, although the physical requirements are still present

S1 You stated in your comments that my oil work 'looked promising', a statement that suggest's you think that I could become a good 'Modern' artist although in my opinion there is no such thing. S2 You can however say that you liked it or you didn't but saying it is good or bad show's a persons ignorance as to the perpose of the artists creation S3 A 'Modern' artists ~~[illegible]~~ intention by the way is that instead of giving you a picture you can relate to and except as what it is, he gives you something that you can see into it what you like and that makes you think about what you're looking at instead of you recognising it and closing you're mind.

(S4 By the way, if you can understand this you're better than Lisa).

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Believe it or not, I can understand what you are saying, because as I read your writing, I can just picture you saying those words and that makes it easier to understand. Do you get that feeling when you read my return entry?

Thank-you for your explanation of Modern Art. Although I like art, I've never studied it, except in relation to literature. It's interesting to discover the parallels between art / literature and music. (all "creative") You find similar things being tried by the artists, just using different mediums. I can't remember the order, but all three forms went through the same periods, though with slight lapses in time. Do you like Modern Art?

I gather that your art is very important to you. Do you ever try to communicate what you are doing in a painting, but in writing instead? It'd be an interesting exercise. Which do you prefer, painting or writing? Don't you think you would still lose your "train of thought" just as much when you're painting as when you're writing? I certainly do. Have you seen Mr Clarke's book called, "Drawing On the Right Side of the Brain"? It has some interesting techniques for developing and extending a persons ability to draw. I'd like to start some painting, but I really wouldn't know how to go about it. My two younger sisters are pretty good at drawing.

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55

T' [51] The other day I met an American exchange student and after talking for awhile was surprised to find that Victorys loss in the Americas Cup worried her about as much as it worried me and believe me it didn't worry me at all. [52] She comes from Ohio and I had to keep stopping and explaining the phrases and slang wich continually entered my speech.

[53] By the way I've just discovered why maths and other subjects frustrate me. Everythings repetative. I am looking at a maths text book, exercise 13D to be presice, and the whole bloody page ~~exercise~~ is the same except that they've changed the objects that are used; the subject is probability. [54] You learn how to do it in the first question and waste the next week finishing the page. [55] No wonder we don't learn anything, we're ~~your~~ too busy trying to get it finished to take advantage of the method of doing it over and over and over and over and over again

[56] Its the same with your summary; not so much comprehension, [57] I don't give a stuff how well I go, Just so long as I get it over and done with

[58] With all those years you teachers spend at College you'd think you'd come up with a better way of teaching.

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STUDENT 3: Above-Average

511

11 [51] My sister is nearly nineteen.
12 [51] wouldn't leave school unless
I did have a promising job.
[52] Tonight I'm going to the orientation night at the tech. [53] I'll
let you know what happened
[illegible]. [54] Even if I get a
job, I could at least try
to do HSC at night or
[illegible]. [55] I think I could really
[illegible] at to study and
[illegible] work at the same
time for just one year.
[51] [illegible] that I'd [illegible]
[illegible] H.S.C. [52] I seem to find
[illegible] to study, [53] especially
[illegible] home. [54] It is very
[illegible] to concentrate when people
[illegible] around you, arguing,
[illegible], fighting etc.
[55] Even if I'm alone in the house,
I have to be in the mood
to work, otherwise I can't
think and get very frustrated.

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56 It doesn't help much, when you've other problems to worry about either. [redacted]
51 H.S.C is [redacted] one year, and everything depends on those few hours of exams. 52 Supposing you were feeling sick, or you were very tired, on the day of an exam. 53 It would be hard to concentrate, but the rest of your life is relying on these exams [illegible]

Everything you have said is true, but everything depends on it more, if you don't even have a go at it. Besides, Year 11 is preparation for Yr 12 and you plenty of ~~exa~~ practice in exam technique - you have the ability to write essays well and they are a major form of assessment in HSC, so don't be too afraid of them.
You also have the opportunity to "get stuck into" some major areas you want to research or follow up, which you ~~[illegible]~~ haven't been able to do up to now.

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Surely part of the trouble is that you haven't had enough to challenge you?

I guess everyone has to find their own space in which to study. When I did my H.S.C. there were five younger brothers and sisters I had to look after while my mother was at work, so I never had the chance to study before they were in bed. 9.00pm was the earliest I could begin and even under these conditions I passed well enough to get into Uni. If you have less time, you just tend to use it well, instead of wasting it. If something is serious enough, you soon learn the ability to concentrate. As one of our famous poets said, "Nothing concentrates a man's thinking than the knowledge that he is going to be hanged the next day"!

How was the Tech. information night? Are the Year 11 courses very different to ours? 12+13 absent

·14.

SI

I don't suppose the courses [illegible] all that different. [illegible] [illegible] Tech courses [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] better than the

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S2 [illegible]. I will be doing the business studies course next year. S3 In year 12 I am hoping to do the T.O.R. Art and Design course. T2 S One of the reasons I am changeing schools is that I'm in such a rut. S3 My work is getting worse and I think I need a fresh start with a change of scenery. S4 I also think that I need a course which is a bit of a S4 challenge. T3 I think that the reason I am restless at school and rebellious and hassle the teachers is because I am so bored with the work. S2 Because in Victoria we don't have graded classes, the more advanced students are wasting time while the slower students are still failing. S3 I think that our classes should be more specialized so as to cater for everyone. S4 They have to help the slower kids with their work

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while at the same time nurture the more advanced kids to better things. S5 As it is, our brains are going to waste while the other's are working overtime.

T4 S1 All through my school career I've just sat back, done the work and achieved good marks. S2 I've never really had to try and so of course now I'm beginning to think that it's all a waste of time. T5 S1 It is very hard to be motivated by your schoolwork when your english teacher gives 19/20 for every essay I hand in. S2 Sorry to get personal but After a while I get the impression that you don't even read them, just assume they're good and write "my" mark on them.

S1 I hardly ever do homework because ever since I can remember, I've got by very well without it. S2 My attitude

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tends to be do as much work as will get you a pass but there's no need to really make an effort.[53] I have often told myself to try and imagine I am one of my fellow students who has to work hard for a pass, but I can't because I've never been like that.

77[51] I suppose that really, honestly, and telling the truth, the reason I am not doing H.S.C is that I'm lazy.[53] I want the best in the end, but I don't want to go the hard way.[53] At the moment, I really don't know why I go to school.[54] Un until now it seems I have been going to school to please others and because its the law.[55] Of course I've got brains, but I feel I'm wasting my time at school and should be out using my brains for myself.

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T8 In S1 nearly every subject, I'm learning things I already know, and for no reason. S1 I learnt to read very early on in life; I was reading novels when my classmates were learning the alphabet. T9 / S1 I remember Mum used to read stories to me every night and I just sort of learnt from that. S2 Thats why I don't believe in taped stories because the kids won't learn to read.

T10 It S1 is now ~~a~~ sixth period and I am ~~[illegible]~~ absolutely furious! S2 [illegible] was hassling me all period and I was very close to swearing at her very rudely. S3 She really gives me the shits.

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